

# ▶ **The Genetic Counseling Connection** ◀

The Official Newsletter of the University of Cincinnati and Cincinnati Children's  
Hospital Medical Center Genetic Counseling Program



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**Take a look at our updated website:**

[www.caahs.uc.edu/gc/gc4u.htm](http://www.caahs.uc.edu/gc/gc4u.htm)

## News from The Chief

You heard it from her yourself

Greetings GCP alumni!

It's been a challenging and rewarding academic year. I will focus on the rewarding aspects.

It's rewarding that our 2006 graduates landed their "ideal" jobs. It was very exciting that all the 06 graduates actually finished in June. Congratulations!!!

It's rewarding that our Clinical Embryology Online course is a resounding success. Thanks to Carol Turner, Misti Williams, Katie Krepkovich, Dr. Lowrie, our course lecturers and others for your efforts. Many practicing GC's, several prospective students and even GC students from several other GC programs are enrolled in our course. For more information for yourself or your colleagues, just go to the online section of our website at [www.cahs.uc.edu/gc/online.htm](http://www.cahs.uc.edu/gc/online.htm)

The Online Teratology Course (otherwise known as OTC will be available soon...)

It's rewarding to have a new partner to lead the program, Melanie Myers. We asked Melanie to become active very quickly after her arrival to develop and teach a new research design class. She is also overseeing the students' internal and external clinical placements, among other things. Welcome, Melanie!

Most exciting is that my husband, our three children and I will all be in the same place at the same time for a few weeks this summer. We plan to go on a real vacation, too (out west)!

Hope to see you all at the Fall NSGC meeting in Nashville. More information will be forthcoming about a GCP alumni reception at this meeting. Enjoy the summer.

Nancy

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## Meet Melanie Myers

### New Assistant Director of the University of Cincinnati's Genetic Counseling Graduate Program

It's great to be back! As a native Cincinnati and a graduate of the UC Genetic Counseling Graduate Program, I'm very excited to return to both my hometown and the starting point of my career in Genetics and Public Health. After graduating from UC's Genetic Counseling program, I spent three years working as a genetic counselor in a prenatal setting in Seattle, WA. I then obtained a PhD from The Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health in Baltimore, MD, where I also volunteered as a genetic counselor in The Johns Hopkins Breast and Ovarian Cancer Surveillance Service. After Hopkins, I moved to Atlanta where I served for two years in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Epidemic Intelligence Service, followed by three years in the CDC's Office of Genomics and Public Health. I take great pride in my UC education, and I am thrilled to return with more perspectives, and to have the opportunity to participate on the team that drives this highly-regarded program forward into the future.

I have enjoyed my first quarter at UC and have jumped right into teaching a Research Design course. Everyone has been very welcoming and it has been wonderful to work with so many bright and motivated students and faculty. I look forward to continued involvement and relationships with the genetic counseling program, the students, the faculty, the alumni and the community. For those of you I may have lost touched with over the years, now you know how to reach me!

My two children (Nicole, 3 and Jordan, 1.5) are excited to be in Cincinnati, where they can see their grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins much more often. My husband, Joel, is also psyched to be back near the Reds and Bengals again (he grew up in Cincinnati also).

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## Congratulations to the Class of 2006!

Looks like they made it!

**Jennifer Fick** - Hi folks! As this will be my last student contribution to the newsletter, I would like to thank all the counselors, physicians, faculty and staff involved in our program. Especially Carol Turner and Nancy Warren - my world could not function without you. I will greatly miss all of my classmates and the wonderful supervisors who have helped shape the counselor that I've become. In three weeks I will head north to Michigan, to work at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. While there I will be active in several areas of genetics including prenatal, pediatric, and adult/cancer counseling, and I will once again be closer to my family and the area where I grew up. I know that my time here in Cincinnati has prepared me well, and although I am sad to leave, I am more than ready to start my job (and to start making some MONEY!!). See you all at the NSGC meeting in the fall!!!

**Brandie Heald** - After graduation I am moving to the Cleveland area. I have accepted a position at the Genomic Medicine Institute at the Cleveland Clinic under Dr Charis Eng. I will mostly be doing cancer counseling, but there is also the opportunity for unique clinical experiences. I have been asked to be involved with Dr. Eng's Barrett's esophageal study, and I have the opportunity to be involved with medical students from Case Western Reserve (where my undergraduate degree is from).

I am grateful for the experiences I had at the UC program. I will miss having my classmates next door to ask questions whenever they pop up, and I will also miss living with Heather and Katie K.

**Katie Krepkovich** - Goodbye Cincinnati and Hello Boston! The past two years have been an amazing challenge, and I have learned so much - not only about genetic counseling, but about myself as well. It is so exciting to have finally reached that light at the end of the tunnel! Since I have been asking, "Is it June yet?" since September, the fact that it is June, feels so unreal. I have accepted a job offer from the Boston University Medical Center in Boston, Massachusetts, where I will see prenatal and pediatric patients, help coordinate activities of the molecular testing lab, and be involved with BU's new genetic counseling training program. I start in mid-July, so right after graduation you will find me furiously packing, searching for a new apartment, and planning my quickly approaching move to Boston! To everyone I have worked with in the program... thank you! And to my classmates... it is strange to think of working in the real world, without you around to share success, stress, celebrations, and breakdowns. I could not have done this without you! Looks like we made it!

**Donnice Michel** - I am on my way out! It's been a wonderful experience, going through GC school, though I must admit I'm glad it's over. I'm planning to spend two weeks in Guatemala taking Spanish classes with my husband, and then I start my new job. I'll be working in Dallas, Texas, at Dallas Children's Medical Center as the coordinator for their metabolics clinic. I'm very excited! I really appreciate everything that this program has done for me and taught me. While it's a little scary to think about finally being off on my own, I do feel prepared. And of course I know that I will always have my classmates and people I have met here to use as resources should I ever need to. Thanks for everything!

**Victoria Raymond** - Ah, the smell of graduation, a real person's job, and a paycheck! Love is in the air. Well, kids, I am done and out of here. I am heading to Ann Arbor, Michigan to take a position with Stephen Gruber in the University of Michigan's Clinical Cancer Genetics Program. (I hope my Ohio State friends don't disown me!) Wendy, you leave some big shoes to fill! Hopefully this fellow UC grad will make you proud! Thanks so much to the GC Program, the DHG, and everyone in between for all of the support! It's been an amazing, and quick, two years and I am ready to take this next step. Well, okay not completely, but here we go! See everyone in Tennessee!

**Heather Taylor** - What a fun/stressful/exciting/panic-inducing/worthwhile 2 years it has been in Cincinnati. I can truly say that I have "come so far", and I have to give credit to many genetic counselors and physicians who dedicated their time to help students like me. When I first came to the program I thought that I would never be able to graduate, but here I am starting a job on July 17th! I will be working at Dayton Children's Medical Center, participating in several pediatric specialty clinics and dabbling in cancer counseling. I'm excited to move back home to my farm and to my fiancé, who will become my slave (conventionally called a husband) on July 8th. I would also like to say thank you to my classmates for making these past 2 years memorable and being a shoulder to cry on. I couldn't have made it without you!

**Misti Williams** - It's been an interesting two years... as a class, we've experienced quite a few changes. Congrats to my classmates, I hope you have a very rewarding first year. Good luck to the incoming class and the second year students, I hope the transition is smooth and that you have a great year! Thanks to everyone in the Program for making this experience one I will not forget-- see you at the AEC!

**Katie Ziegler** - I can't believe 2 years are over already! WOW! I'm certainly going to miss all my classmates, friends, and mentors who have helped me survive my last 2 years in Cincinnati. But, I'm looking forward to bigger and better things...namely, a paycheck and no more homework :) Beginning in July, I will be the newest prenatal counselor at The Ohio State University Medical Center. I'm looking forward to the change of scenery and am really excited to finally be a "real genetic counselor". I've been waiting since I was 14! Columbus, here I come!

## Where are the First Years spending the summer?

Some are headed for the sun, back to old stomping grounds, or to new places to explore!

**Monica Giovanni** - I will be spending my summer in Boston, at Brigham and Women's Hospital. I will be working in adult and cardiovascular genetics as well as working on the Family History Project that is assessing the usefulness of the Surgeon General's Family History Tool. I'm so excited to move back to Cambridge!

**Andrea Guskowski** - My 2006 summer clinical rotation is at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, from the first week in July through mid-August. CHW has many pediatric clinics as well as prenatal, cancer and other specialty clinics. There are a wide range of counseling opportunities plus regional and national patient populations.

**Jody Haubner** - This summer I will be returning to my old stomping grounds of Columbus, OH. I will be working at OSU, counseling hereditary cancer cases. I am looking forward to the experience of working full-time as a genetic counselor and honing my counseling skills with talented counselors in the Columbus area. This is my rite of passage in order to become a second year and I can't wait!

**Audrey Karlea** - This summer I will be working in Fresno California at a perinatal clinic, as well as a private practice general genetic clinic. I will be seeing mostly prenatal cases with some pediatrics and adult/cancer genetics as well. I'm very excited to be heading back to California for an extended period of time. However, I am not very excited about the fact that it is very common for the temperature to be in the triple digits.

**Kate Lamvik** - I will be doing my summer internship at UCSF in San Francisco, CA. I will be working in a pediatric clinic as well as a neuro-metabolic clinic. I am very excited to have the chance to work in a big city where there is a lot of diversity.

**Camila Vieira** - Wow, this year really flew by! I am looking forward to my summer internship in Pittsburgh, PA. I will be rotating at two different sites: Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, and Allegheny General Hospital. I will be seeing prenatal cases once a week and pediatric metabolic cases four days a week. I cannot wait to have a shot at being a full time genetic counselor for 6 weeks!

**Amy Woltanski** - I am spending my summer in Omaha, Nebraska at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. It is going to be a very diverse experience - I am working in general genetics, cancer, and prenatal, and doing an occasional rotation through the Craniofacial Clinic and the Children's Developmental Clinic. I am excited to spend more time in clinic (without worrying about classes!) and see a different part of the country for a few weeks.

**Katie Wusik** - I will be completing my summer internship in Columbus, OH at the James Cancer Center. I will see primarily cancer patients, but I will also have the opportunity to see some adult genetics as well.

## Research Topics

What challenges are the first years undertaking?

**Monica Giovanni** - I will be working with Dr. John Greinwald to identify the deafness causing genes in two families, one with autosomal dominant hearing loss and the other with autosomal recessive hearing loss. I will be performing a linkage and mapping study of candidate genes.

**Andrea Guskowski** - My graduate research thesis is entitled, "Patient responses regarding a multidisciplinary approach to treatment of high risk pregnancies with fetal anomalies." I am working with the Fetal Care Center of Cincinnati to describe patient experiences at the Fetal Care Center of Cincinnati regarding 1.) medical evaluation of the fetal anomaly, 2.) patient comprehension of medical information, 3.) patient informed consent regarding diagnosis and management, 4.) patient decision-making ability, and 5.) emotional support from counseling staff. I am interested in this research topic because of the heightened sensitivity among high risk patients and the recent advancements in technology that make fetal therapy centers possible.

**Jody Haubner** - My thesis project is entitled, "Employers' Perspectives on the PhD in Genetic Counseling." I am working with Nancy Warren, Melanie Myers, and Dr. Carl Huether to determine employer interest in the development of a PhD program in genetic counseling. I will be conducting phone interviews with employers across the following settings: industry, government, hospital/clinic, academic, laboratory, and research. I look forward to moving full-steam ahead this summer!

**Audrey Karlea** - For my master's thesis I will be doing a cost analysis of two common treatments for infants with Pierre Robin Sequence who have moderate to severe upper airway obstruction. I am working with Dr. Robert Hopkin, Dawn Rothchild, and Dr. Chris Gordon.

**Kate Lamvik** - My thesis project involves looking at central nervous system abnormalities associated with neurofibromatosis type 1. I am working with Dr. Elizabeth Schorry, a clinical geneticist at CCHMC, on a retrospective database and medical record review. The purpose of this study is to determine how frequently optic pathway tumors occur concurrently with other CNS abnormalities.

**Camila Vieira** – For my thesis project, I will be looking at the prevalence of genetic conditions and birth defects in International Adoptees. I will be working with Martha Walker, surveying adoptive parents in order to find out whether their child has been diagnosed with a genetic condition and how the diagnosis may have impacted their lives.

**Amy Woltanski** – For my thesis, I am surveying genetic counselors regarding their religious beliefs and professional and personal attitudes toward abortion. I am using questions from an annual general population survey. I plan to compare the results of my survey with women in the general population that have a Master's degree or higher to assess any differences between genetic counselors and those with similar education levels. No other studies have been published that look at this comparison. I am working with Debi Cragun.

**Katie Wusik** - I will be using a validated tool to quantitatively assess cultural competency levels in the genetic counseling student population in North America. Genetic counseling students have never been assessed in this way.

## Meet the Class of 2008!

Who are they, where did they come from, and who sent them?



### Erin Acra

Erin received a B.S. in Biology and Chemistry from The University of Great Falls, Montana, in 2003. She recently graduated from the University of Cincinnati, with an M.S. in Biology.



### Margaret Au

Margaret received a BS in Psychology from Western Kentucky University in 2004, and is currently working towards an MBE in Bioethics from the University of Pennsylvania. She also works at the National Human Genome Research Institute.



### Courtney Doughty

Courtney will graduate from Miami University, Ohio in 2006, with a major in Zoology. She is currently working as a health educator for the Office of Health Education.



### Kimberly Edge

Kimberly earned her B.S.S. in Specialized Studies from Ohio University in 2005. She is currently working as a counselor for people with disabilities at Recreation Unlimited in Ashley, Ohio.



### **Jessica Hoffman**

Jessica attended Tulane University, and received a BS in Cell and Molecular Biology in 2003. She is currently a veterinary technician at St. Francis Animal Hospital in Little River, South Carolina.



### **Melissa Koehler**

Melissa earned a BS in Biology and a BA in English from Regis University, Boulder Colorado in 2002. She is currently a research technician at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.



### **Thea Owens**

Thea is a recent graduate of the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point. She majored in Biology and minored in Psychology and Chemistry. Thea is currently working as an assistant to the director of Residential Living at UWSP.



### **Christine Spaeth**

Christine earned a BA in Behavioral Biology from Johns Hopkins University, Maryland, in 1989. In the past she has worked as a family services coordinator and as a research technician.



### **Brian Strike**

Brian received a B.S. in Molecular Biology from Vanderbilt University in 2005. He is currently working as a research assistant at the Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

## A Time For Remembrance

*from Perspectives in Genetic Counseling – Volume 28 Issue 2 – page 19*

### Member News

*By Jessica Mandell, MS, Perspective Editor*

#### A Colleague We Will Miss

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of NSGC member, **Mary-Jo Rosenblatt**. Mary-Jo died of cancer on April 10 at the age of 40. She is survived by her husband, Michael, and her two sons, Joshua and Zachary. Mary-Jo received her BA in 1987 from SUNY Albany and her Master's degree in genetics from the University of Cincinnati in 1991. At the time of her passing, she was a genetic counselor at the Albany Medical Center.

In the words of long-time friend and colleague, **Luba Djurdjinovic**, "It does not seem possible that this vibrant woman will no longer grace us with her laughter, willingness to help at a moments notice and readiness to champion the genetic counseling profession. Many of us had the opportunity to witness her love and devotion for her family, to whom we send our deepest sympathies. We are grateful for the professional contribution and memories. She will be missed."

As a gift to her husband and sons, Luba is coordinating a collection of remembrances about Mary-Jo from her genetic counseling colleagues. Photos, stories and cards are welcome. Please send all contributions to: Luba Djurdjinovic, 124 Front Street, Binghamton, NY, 13905.

In addition, a scholarship fund is being set up in honor of Mary-Jo at her high school. for more information on donating, please contact Julie Lundberg at [LundbeJ@mail.amc.edu](mailto:LundbeJ@mail.amc.edu)

### We mourn the recent passing of members of the Genetic Counseling Program Advisory Committee.

Joseph Zins, EdD  
Jack Rubinstein, MD  
Robert Baumiller, PhD

We extend our sympathies to their families and friends. Each of these men were renowned in their respective areas of expertise and were involved with the Genetic Counseling Program for many years. They contributed in countless ways to the design and functioning of the Program, including teaching and mentoring students. We will miss them.

## The Latest News

From the alumni, program, and staff

We are currently working on an on-line version of our Teratology course! Students and health care professionals will be able to acquire the credit they need from the comfort of their own home. This course is instructed by Dr. Lowrie who also teaches our clinical embryology online course. Check our website for course availability!

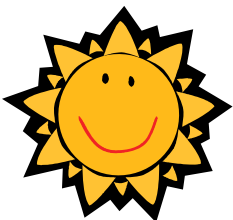
### Clinical Embryology On-Line

In an effort to afford others greater opportunity to learn about genetic counseling, our successful Clinical Embryology course is now being offered to prospective students and practicing health care professionals in an online version. We are approved by the American Board of Genetic Counseling and the American Counseling Association to offer category 1 genetic counseling continuing education units for the course, the first online course to be approved in genetic counseling. Clinical Embryology is also approved for CAT 1 CEU, CME, and CNE credits. The 25 hour course is divided equally into basic embryology lectures and clinical application presentations.

Lectures by embryologist and Coursemaster, DJ Lowrie Jr., PhD, are enhanced by participation of medical geneticists and physicians who contribute their knowledge and experience from clinical settings. Each lecture is presented on Blackboard using a combined audio/video format and detailed PowerPoint slides. Current enrollment consists of genetic counselors from all over the US and in England, several geneticists, genetic counseling graduate students from another graduate program, as well as undergraduate and graduate students.

For more information and registration methods, see our website:

[www.cahs.uc.edu/gc/online.htm](http://www.cahs.uc.edu/gc/online.htm)



Everyone have a safe and happy **Summer**