

Genetic Counselors

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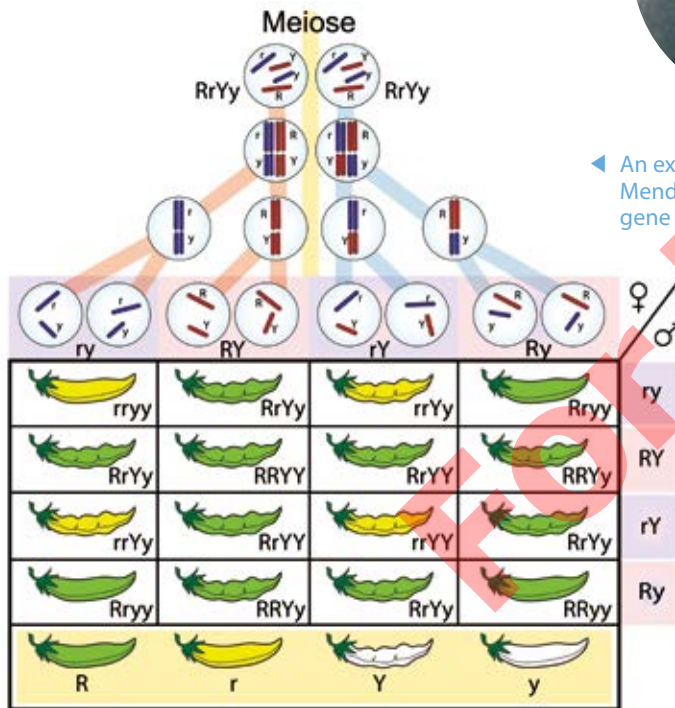
Genetic Counselors' Jobs

In history, genetic research goes back to the 1800s. By studying plants, a researcher named Gregor Mendel helped us begin to understand how genes are passed from parents to children. Just one hundred years later, genetic researchers were doing experiments to make babies with no parents!

Gregor Mendel ▶



◀ An example showing Mendel's Law of gene exchange



A counselor talking to a patient

But not everyone who studies genetics wants to work in a lab studying or trying to change the genes in babies. Some people who study genetics want to use what they learn to help people. These genetic scientists want to be counselors. They want to explain to people what their genes are doing, both good things and bad things. They want to help people understand how doctors might be able to help them.



A blood sample for a lab

There are many different jobs Genetic Counselors (GCs) can do. GCs can do research. They can study the connection between genes and diseases. They can study how genes change slowly over time or how genes change suddenly without warning.



A couple in a counselor's office

Genetic counselors may choose to focus on helping families. They can talk to people about a disease that many people in the family seem to have. Sometimes these diseases are connected to genes within the family. Genetic counselors can also help husbands and wives who want children. They can help hopeful parents know the best ways to have healthy babies.

Genetic counselors can work with the government to make new laws. These laws might stop scientists from doing research with future bad effects. Other laws can aim to protect people from being treated poorly by others because of genes in their families.

Talking to a government official



Genetic counselors can work with doctors in a hospital or clinic. These counselors talk to patients who have a high chance of developing a genetic disease. A counselor can explain which actions might be helpful for the patient and which actions may not be helpful.



Doctors and a counselor with a patient

Comprehension Questions

- Genetic counselors can . . .
 - study connections between genes.
 - talk to families.
 - help husbands and wives who want to have babies.
 - All of the above
- Which university degree does a GC need?
 - Bachelors
 - Masters
 - Ph.D.
 - All of the above
- GCs need good communication skills in order to . . .
 - find experienced counselors.
 - take the certificate test.
 - talk to people.
 - understand new laws.
- Where might a GC who is a teacher work?
 - In a school for doctors
 - In a clinic
 - In a lab
 - All of the above
- What kind of genetic tests were available decades ago?
 - Tests for cancer
 - Tests for careers
 - Tests for intelligence
 - Tests for mental illness

Key 1. (d) 2. (b) 3. (c) 4. (d) 5. (a)

Glossary



■ **aim** (v.) to have the purpose of; to set a goal as



■ **biology** (n.) the study of living things



■ **certificate** (n.) a document that says a person is a professional and has had special training



■ **chemistry** (n.) the study of all substances



■ **clinic** (n.) a small, private doctor's office