Canadian Association of Genetic Counsellors | Association canadienne des conseillers en génétique

Regulation of Canadian Genetic Counsellors: A Call to Action

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OAKVILLE, ONTARIO - The Canadian Association of Genetic Counsellors (CAGC) -Canadian Board of Genetic Counselling (CBGC) Provincial Genetic Counsellor Working Group has published a unified, national position statement on the critical importance of legal regulation of the genetic counsellor profession in Canada: http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/jgc4.70302

Genetic counsellors (GCs), are highly trained allied health professionals with integral roles in the Canadian healthcare system, practicing in private industry and the public sector. While certified GCs follow well-established practice and training standards, Canada has fallen behind in establishing comprehensive legal oversight of the profession, including how GCs practice, or even who can call themselves "genetic counsellor". This is contrary to most other healthcare professionals practicing in Canada, who are typically regulated by provincial colleges. There is a substantial risk to the Canadian public to receive inadequate or even harmful care. Further, the current non-regulated model largely restricts the ability of GCs to expand services beyond tertiary centres, inhibiting public access.

Over the past year, a working group of national experts was convened to write a unified position statement on the necessity of legal regulation of GCs in Canada, which was recently published in the Journal of Genetic Counseling. The authors included representatives from the Canadian Association of Genetic Counsellors, Canadian Board of Genetic Counselling, several provincial organizations, as well as an expert in legal and medical ethics, a medical genetics physician, and the leader of a patient support organization.

We ask that you read the position statement to better understand the importance of this issue. We hope that you/your organization will advocate alongside our provincial and national GC organizations in support of legal regulation of genetic counsellors across Canada. The genetic counsellor associations in your province welcome your contact by email and can provide you information on where to direct a support letter.

The importance of this endeavor is perfectly summarized by Ms. Chiquita Hessels, patient partner, founder, and co-chair of the Li Fraumeni Syndrome Association Canada:

> *"As a patient, when I found out that genetic counsellors were not regulated in Canada, not only was I dumbfounded, but shocked that there is no legal oversight of genetic counsellors like other healthcare professionals and that we, the patients, are not protected."*

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