

Genetic testing can help adoptees get crucial hereditary information

According to US Census data (2000), adoptees account for more than 2.5 percent of the U.S. population (7.8 million). Worldwide, the United Nations estimates that at least 260,000 children are adopted annually, and the number of children globally who have lost both parents is more than 60 times this number. Although some adoptees have access to family history information (for example, through open adoption or biological relative adoption), many do not. One study found that for adoptees in general, family medical information was available for less than half of birth fathers. For international adoptees (currently one-quarter of adoptions), this problem is exacerbated not only by logistical difficulties but also by well-established problems surrounding the limitations of medical records in many countries from which international adoptions occur.

Clinical actionability of family health history (FHx) in practice is often seen in situations in which the pattern of disease in the family suggests the presence of a genetic disorder and indicates the need for earlier screening or other interventions. Many adoptees do not have access to this potentially lifesaving information. However, emerging genomic technologies are beginning to offer the possibility of accessing some of this medically actionable genetic information. An important point of similarity between genetic data and family history is that both have the greatest clinical impact on medical care when they serve to indicate an uncommon, but dramatic, risk such as that indicated by a strong family history of early diagnosis of breast cancer, colon cancer, or the like (knowledge of which can lead to recommendations for earlier screening or overtly preventive intervention).

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Can targeted genetic testing offer useful health information to adoptees?](#)