

As precision medicine explodes, there aren't enough genetic counselors to go around

[When Nancy] Wurtzel stared at the blue glow of her computer screen announcing she had two copies of the ApoE4 variant and quoting her a 60-percent chance of developing Alzheimer's by age 85, she panicked. "I could hardly catch my breath, and I felt like the floor was opening up. The reality hit me," says Wurtzel.

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As the field of precision medicine explodes, the nation's [4,600 genetic counselors](#) have the job of interpreting genetic-testing results for patients and advising them on whether they should get more testing or medical treatment.

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As demand for their services grows, the field is facing a national [shortage](#) in which there are an estimated two to three jobs available for every graduate of genetic-counselor training programs. To address it, in addition to recruiting future students and expanding training programs, professional societies are at work trying to change the way genetic counselors are viewed in the health-care system.

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In the meantime, start-ups have emerged to fill the information gap for DTC patients by making counseling services more accessible and cheaper. In July, My Gene Counsel plans to launch a digital product that will help users interpret their test results for hereditary cancer genes.

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"I wished someone was there to listen to what I was feeling at the time," [Wurtzel] says. "I don't advise anyone to do it by themselves."

**Read full, original post:** [Can Genetic Counselors Keep Up With 23andMe?](#)