

## **Translating Our Knowledge of Family History into Public Health Action**

The evident success of family history in the management of single-gene disorders has not been fully translated to the management of common, complex chronic diseases like cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes. Such translation would make of family history a public health tool of great importance. There are indications that such translation is possible: 1) family history is an established risk factor for many common chronic diseases; 2) professional guidelines usually include family history as a key variable to assess health risk and motivate behavioral changes. However, more is needed to use family history as a public health tool. Namely, the use of family history in public health should be formally evaluated following approaches similar to the ones applied to genetic tests. One such approach is the ACCE framework; that is, examining the analytical validity, clinical validity, clinical utility, and ethical, legal, and social issues involving the use of using family history in populations. For some chronic diseases, like breast cancer, there has been significant progress in this regard. Additionally, organizations in the U.S.A. have started to develop tools that collect standardized family histories of common chronic diseases with the goal of making this information compatible with electronic medical records. The use of family history in public health appears to have a bright future.

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