Title: EpiGC: A Collaborative Approach to an Emerging Professional and Clinical Need

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Recent publications find causative *de novo* variants in approximately 30% of patients with severe epilepsies and provide evidence for a strong genetic component in an even larger subset of patients with seizure disorders. In some instances, genotype specific treatment is already indicated, but the current lack of awareness about the importance of genetic testing among epilepsy clinicians puts optimal patient care at risk. The advent of next generation sequencing has changed the landscape of both epilepsy genetic testing and genetic counseling. While genetic counselors (GCs) have been involved in neurology practices for many years, until recently there were none who specialized in epilepsy.

In February 2016, a group of GCs specializing in epilepsy genetics formally announced a collaboration called EpiGC (http://epilepsygenetics.net/epigc-genetic-counseling-for-patients-with-epilepsy/). Members of the group come from diverse backgrounds, including clinical practice, diagnostic laboratories, and clinical research. The goals of EpiGC are to: 1) serve as a resource/provide education to the neurology community and advocacy groups; 2) promote the value of genetics and genetic counseling in the clinical evaluation of patients with epilepsy; 3) promote the use of genetic testing laboratories that utilize the expertise of genetic counselors; and 4) advocate for the improved reimbursement of genetic testing for epilepsy.

EpiGC has begun efforts to influence policy development and educational outreach with key professional entities. We are launching a website (www.epigc.org) and are also exploring the possibility of establishing a not-for-profit organization which would provide education and resources to families, advocacy groups and healthcare providers. EpiGC represents a successful professional collaboration between clinical, research, and industry-based GCs to promote high quality clinical care for patients and needed education for our non-genetics medical colleagues. This type of collaboration is a unique and important model as our profession continues to evolve.