

**Baylor College of Medicine**  
**Second Annual Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Showcase**  
**Tuesday, October 5, 2021**

**Title of Proposal:** Impact of ethnocultural competency training on genetic counselors' clinical interactions

**BCM Mission Area:** Research

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**Abstract:**

This research is part of a Master's degree thesis through the Baylor College of Medicine Genetic Counseling Program. As part of BCM's School of Health Professions, the program, its leadership and its students are committed to furthering the college's mission of diversity, equity and inclusion. This research is focused on tackling one avenue in which additional information would be instrumental in creating an environment that fosters that vision and promotes the field of genetic counseling's own mission of diversity as well. The genetic counseling profession has been committed to providing equitable care for patients of various ethnocultural backgrounds, especially as genetic counselors have become increasingly aware of the need to reach their growing multicultural patient populations in more intentional and sensitive ways. As such, it is vital for genetic counselors to be equipped to recognize various components of cultural norms to effectively navigate clinical conversations with patients from various backgrounds. These cultural norms may include body language, cultural influence on perception of healthcare and cultural traditions, all of which impact clinical interactions with patients. Concerns about genetic counseling cultural competency training (CCT) include content delivery through primarily White Caucasian instructors, the risk of perpetuating cultural stereotypes, and the added pressure on students of 'racial and ethnic minorities' to represent the minority groups they identify with. However, at this time, there is still a gap in the profession's knowledge of the content that genetic counseling programs have chosen to

incorporate into their CCT curricula. There is also a gap in the understanding of the specific ethnicity-focused content of these curricula and how this ethnocultural CCT translates into the genetic counselors' clinical practice. In order to characterize the current state of ethnocultural CCT in genetic counseling programs and its perceived efficacy in genetic counseling clinical interactions, we surveyed second-year genetic counseling students and recent graduates about their perceptions of the type, format and perceived effectiveness of the country-of-origin or ethnic CCT they received through their graduate programs. The survey also assessed participants' self-reported levels of comfort and preparedness when working with patients from ethnocultural backgrounds different than their own. In characterizing the experience of participants, we can better inform genetic counseling graduate program leadership on how to build CCT curricula to help their graduates effectively meet the growing needs of an ever-diversifying population. This research will provide genetic counseling programs with the opportunity to evaluate their own CCT and determine its efficacy. The results will shed light on the issue of discrepancies in ethnocultural competency training as a whole and pave the way for future studies dissecting this further. This will ultimately contribute to the ongoing efforts to equip genetic counselors to meet the needs of patients from countries of origin and ethnic backgrounds different than their own which is consistent with NSGC's Strategic Area of Focus 4, "Diversity and Inclusion".