

Music of Life: What is a Gene

Due to UK projects such as the 100,000 Genomes Project there has been a surge in 'conversations around genomics' happening with patients in the NHS. And yet, there has been limited support for health professionals in how to communicate genomic information appropriately when faced directly with a patient. Explaining, for example, a 'pathogenic variant' or 'variant of uncertain significance' can be a real challenge. Currently there is no consistency in how to communicate such concepts and there are no tools to support non-specialist health professionals in how to do this.

The Society and Ethics Research group at the Wellcome Genome Campus, Cambridge UK is a team of social science researchers, headed by Dr Anna Middleton, who focus on genomics in society. They have worked together with creatives and filmmakers and a team of genetic counsellors to create a series of 6 x ~90' films that can be used in and after consultation by health professionals who need to communicate genetic information to patients.

'What is a Gene' is the introductory film of the series, intended to be shown first to a patient and then followed by one or more of the other films from the series as appropriate to their specific diagnosis. If proven effective over a course of clinical trials, the Music of Life film series will be made available to health professionals all over the UK and beyond. The hope is that the lively and appealing metaphor, based around the theme of music, will help patients wade into genetics, an area that has all too often been opaque to non-experts.

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