

Notes from the United Kingdom

The role of nurses in genetics

Nurses have played an important and recognised role in genetics services for many decades. The Association of Genetic Nurses and Counsellors was established in the 1990s for nurses mostly working within clinical genetics www.agnc.org.uk . It has around 300 members. Genetic nurses work as members of a multidisciplinary team led by a medical consultant and evaluate, diagnose, counsel, and manage clients with or at risk for a genetic condition. This group is a constituent member of the British Society of Genomic Medicine (BSGM) www.bsgm.org.uk which represents members from the AGNC as well as clinical scientists, researchers and medical professionals. The Genetic Counsellor Registration Board now regulates the registration of genetic counselors (many of whom are nurses) working in the clinical specialty www.gcrb.org.uk.

Increasingly, the nursing role is becoming recognised in mainstream healthcare and is well established in some specialties, particularly cancer and cardiology. Nurses whose work focuses on people with specific inherited conditions, such as cystic fibrosis, haemophilia, and sickle cell and thalassaemia are also well established and some have their own speciality professional organisations. They provide care to their specialty population that includes providing information about inheritance, genetic testing, and implications of test results.