

**Listen to an online broadcast which takes place some time in the year 2014...**

**Optional exercise** - Which person mentions the following topics, the Interviewer (I) or the Genetic Counsellor (GC)? They are *not* in the order you hear them. (Answers below)

- a. a new way of keeping personal medical information
- b. children inheriting diseases from their parents
- c. new genetic tests
- d. people going to counselling in pairs
- e. patient being able to choose
- f. patients' being able to see quickly which disease they might suffer from in the future

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*Interviewer* Good afternoon and welcome to Health Forum. Today we have with us Kate Hulme, who is a genetic counsellor with the Derbyshire Health Zone. Tell us first of all a bit about your background.

*Genetic counsellor* Yes, well I've been in the profession for about ten years now and it's changed a little since I started. Traditionally, genetic counselling was all about offering advice and support for people who might be at risk from developing cancer, or for expectant mothers to make informed decisions about the various tests available for their unborn child, for things like Down's Syndrome or Cystic Fibrosis...

*Interviewer* ...conditions based on a single-gene defect...

*Genetic counsellor*...that's right, and another important aspect was the discussion we had with the patient about probabilities and managing risk, and about who else might be affected by whatever decision they take. That's still part of the job...

*Interviewer* But things have moved on since those days, haven't they? A whole new range of genetic tests have recently become available...

*Genetic counsellor* Well, indeed. The job I do these days has changed significantly since the National Mutation Search Programme was completed. This has opened up a whole new set of medical and personal questions for patients and their families.

*Interviewer* What's the process you go through with a patient who comes to you?

*Genetic counsellor* Well, an increasing number of clients have been to their doctor and taken the new combined *GenProfile*, the one with the hundred or so tests, perhaps because they're at an age where they're thinking of buying a house, starting a family, that sort of thing, so they're worried about getting life insurance or passing something on to their children...

*Interviewer* You get a lot of couples I believe

*Genetic counsellor* That's right. Anyway, we take them through the consequences of each result by cross-referencing their family history file with their current health index. Then we can give them probability ratings so that the client can see potential problem areas at a glance. In most cases we can offer concrete advice about areas of future risk behaviour associated with diet, lifestyle and so on. Things they might like to consider...

*Interviewer* ...but ultimately it's up to them whether they take your advice?

*Genetic counsellor* Yes, absolutely. Obviously, an individual's health status is now no longer a matter for that person alone...

*Interviewer* You mean the new NHS swipe card that the government brought in last month?

*Genetic counsellor* ...yes, and we're still explaining the implications of that, addressing people's concerns about confidentiality and so on. But more often what they want is some support and reassurance about the specific gene intervention they might have to embark on and...

*Interviewer* So talking things through is still a key part of your work?

*Genetic counsellor* Oh, for sure...

**Answers: aI, bGC, cI, dI, eI, fGC**