

By Bobbie Barbrey, RPH, CCN

Do your genes define your destiny? Must you resign yourself to a lifetime of health issues because you got the wrong genes? The genes we are born with are a fixed sequence of base pairs forming our DNA. Our DNA does not change. You will have this genetic code the rest of your life. Our genes, for example, determine gender, hair, eye, and skin color, among many other characteristics. However, the most important point I can make about your genes is this: *your genes don't determine your health destiny—it's how you choose to live your life that defines how these genes express themselves during your lifetime.* When my clients are fearful of getting a similar health issue that a sibling has, I love being able to tell them, "No, you are not destined to have the same disease!" I love the big sigh of relief when they understand that.

There is an ideal pairing of bases for every gene. When these get paired incorrectly you now have what is referred to as a genetic SNP. SNPs are extremely common and every person has them. Many have described that variation as a sort of "switch" that might turn a given genetic tendency "on" or "off." This has resulted in an enormous amount of research into how to predict the impact of these gene SNPs. Some of this information can be useful but much of it just leads to more health anxiety.

On the positive side, researchers have found that some SNPs can predict a person's response to certain drugs. This can be very useful information for someone who is having a hard time finding a pain medication they can take, or an anxiety medication that would be most appropriate for them. Doctors can run these panels very easily now. SNPs can also show a familial inheritance of disease genes, such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. What they do *not* show is the likelihood of these diseases expressing.

THE VALUE OF GENETIC INFORMATION

While SNPs may influence your health throughout your lifetime, the biggest influence is under your control, with very few exceptions. How you live your life will control whether or not a SNP is expressed in an unhealthy way. We talked earlier of thinking of a SNP as like a light switch. When we walk into a room we can turn the switch on or off. Our lifestyle, diet, and targeted nutritional supplementation control the switch on the SNPs. Now you should begin to feel like you are in control. How does that feel? Empowered, I hope!

Remember: SNPs are about information, not destiny. They won't tell you what will happen to you but they might suggest a tendency toward a possible outcome. For example, let's say your brother and sister both have thyroid disease. You might be thinking, "I'm destined to have thyroid disease." Absolutely not. They don't have thyroid

Genes: A Blueprint But Not Your Destiny



Pharmacist Bobbie Barbrey explains to a client which SNPs in their genetic profile might deserve special attention in developing an optimum health plan.

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disease because of a SNP that preordains that. It's how they live their life that will turn a predisposition into a reality. Too much stress, too many of the wrong foods, not enough sleep, and at some point the thyroid gland will suffer in its function.

USING THE GENE TESTS

I hope that you are starting to get the picture that you have an enormous amount of control over the genes that impact your health. However, the information available from gene testing can provide some important guidance.

One example I see often in my practice has to do with clearing histamine. There's a genetic SNP that gives me an idea of how well you can clear it. For the chronic allergy patient who can't seem to get their symptoms under control, knowing that they have SNPs on this gene can be extremely helpful. That allows me to choose a supplement that's known for clearing out the histamine.

Another common one I see is the SNP that makes one more susceptible to pesticides and herbicides. This person should pay special attention to avoid this exposure. If you worked on a farm, lived in a home adjacent to these fields, or worked in a gardening center you would want to know this! Two other useful markers can identify if you have a susceptibility to celiac disease and whether you may be sensitive to gluten, helpful data especially for someone having GI issues.

MEDICAP PHARMACY IS MOVING UP!

After 19 years we are moving to a new location in the same shopping center and will have twice the space! Check our FaceBook page for our grand re-opening celebration in May. www.facebook.com/medicapraleigh. Thank you to all of our wonderful customers who have made this possible.

When we combine specific information about someone's genetic profile together with information about their symptoms, it's a powerful combination. That's when the genetic test comes to life! The problem today is there seems to be a supplement offered for every SNP and I don't agree with addressing every SNP found. When there is no symptom it is unlikely that the SNP is being expressed, thus there is no need to take a supplement for it.

I find genetic tests to be most useful as a part of a comprehensive process involving other basic testing. My starting place is simple and fundamental: I listen to a patient's symptoms and get a good history and begin to connect the dots with their symptoms. I also look at any recent labs they have completed that might include a CBC and metabolic panel (always start here!), hormone testing, food sensitivity testing, stool testing, and others. If you do not have

recent labs I can requisition them through Lab Corp. Run these panels once a year to see what is moving out of the optimal range. Don't guess-test.

I also use the Biomeridian, a non-invasive energetic assessment device, for all patients as it indicates areas of stress in the body that deserve my focused attention. My approach is to find the first 'domino' in the sequence, the root cause, and work from there.

If we need to dig deeper and want to look at genetics, I work with a specialized test called *Your Genomic Resource*. Much of the genetic testing available on-line offers little in the way of useful reports to interpret the data. The software I use allows me to drop your results into a sophisticated software program and to look at areas in the body that need support—not so much the individual SNPs, but the patterns identified in the software and the cumulative effect that they have on you. The results are summarized into a chart that gives me feedback on the genetic health of systems in the body that interfere with proper metabolism, antioxidant capacity, energy production, and many other health issues.

THE POWER OF LIFE CHOICES

Everything that you do influences gene expression. If you focus on healthy living, your genes will be wonderfully kind to you. If you abuse your body, you may encounter some health challenges. This is even more important advice in this current coronavirus climate. We are exposed to many different viruses all the time. Keep your immune system strong and you will weather this storm. Your lifestyle and diet are the keys. When you take responsibility for your health you enjoy the benefits. There will always be another virus, another bacterium, another toxin. Prepare now. We have an entire section in our health and wellness pharmacy devoted to supporting your health against the onslaught of toxins. I also encourage you to come in for an individual consult to develop a comprehensive plan for optimal health. Let's make your health the best it can be!

Bobbie Barbrey, RPh, CCN, a registered pharmacist and a certified clinical nutritionist, is the owner of Medicap Pharmacy in North Raleigh, a full-service retail pharmacy, which also offers compounding and nutritional counseling.

For more information, contact:
Bobbie Barbrey, RPh
Certified Clinical Nutritionist
MEDICAP PHARMACY
6675-101 Falls of Neuse Road
Raleigh, NC 27615
Telephone: (919) 676-6161
Medicap.Raleigh@gmail.com
www.MedicapRaleigh.com
Shop.MedicapRaleigh.com