GENETIC COUNSELING (M.S.)

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The graduate program in Genetic Counseling is located in the Center for Molecular Medicine and Genetics (CMMG). Genetic counselors are medical professionals who help people understand and adapt to the medical, psychological and familial implications of genetic contributions to disease. This is achieved by procuring and interpreting family and medical histories to assess the chance of disease occurrence or recurrence, educating patients about inheritance, testing, management, prevention, resources and research, and providing counseling to promote informed decision making and adaptation to genetic risk or genetic disease. The practice of genetic counseling requires comprehensive knowledge of human and medical genetics in combination with an appreciation for the psychological, ethical, and social issues associated with genetic disorders. It also requires critical thinking and interpersonal communication skills. Genetic counselors generally work as part of a health care delivery team in a variety of genetics clinics such as pediatric genetics, reproductive genetics, cancer genetics, metabolic clinic, cardiovascular genetics and neurogenetics. Genetic counselors also work in a variety of other settings including clinical laboratories, public health departments, universities, advocacy organizations, and public policy organizations. In addition to providing genetic counseling services to patients, genetic counselors may have roles in research, genetic testing, leadership, advocacy, public policy, and/or education.

The graduate program in genetic counseling is designed to prepare students with the appropriate knowledge base and practical experience to function as genetic counselors in a variety of clinical work settings. The curriculum consists of course work in fundamental genetic principles, human and medical genetics, embryology, epidemiological principles, and interviewing and counseling techniques. In addition, students gain practical experience by doing supervised clinical internships in a variety of genetic and subspecialty clinics as well as clinical genetics laboratories. Students are also required to complete a clinical research project (Plan B) and obtain research training as part of the research project process. This program is accredited by the Accreditation Council of Genetic Counseling.

Admission Requirements

Admission to these programs is contingent upon admission to the Graduate School (http://bulletins.wayne.edu/graduate/general-information/admission) and the graduate programs of the School of Medicine (http://bulletins.wayne.edu/graduate/school-medicine/programs), respectively. Applicants must have a baccalaureate degree with a grade point average of at least 3.0 or equivalent. Undergraduate course work in biology, biochemistry, chemistry, genetics, organic chemistry, statistics and psychology is required. Also required are three letters of recommendation, a written essay, and Graduate Record Examination scores. Prospective students are encouraged to shadow and/or speak with a genetic counselor to obtain in depth knowledge about the field before applying. The genetic counseling program also holds open houses 2-3 times a year to give applicants exposure to genetic counselors and genetic counseling situations. Advocacy experience is also a prerequisite to admission.

The Master of Science in Genetic Counseling is offered only as master’s degree Plan B (http://bulletins.wayne.edu/graduate/general-information/degree-certificate-requirements/#mastersdegreestext), requiring a research project and including approximately forty-seven credits: thirty-two credits in core course work, six credits in clinical internships, six credits for the research project and three elective credits. Students should contact the Program Director (geneticcounseling@med.wayne.edu) for more details about required courses.