

# Pathologists call for new training program to support personalized medicine

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Doctors in the Department of Pathology at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) have issued "A Call to Action" for the medical profession to catch up with the technology and business communities in the application of genomics to personalized health care.

In a Special Article in this month's issue of the *American Journal of Clinical Pathology*, senior author Jeffrey Saffitz, MD, PhD, and colleagues call for Genomics and Personalized Medicine to become a core competency for all Pathology trainees by 2012, writing, "Genomics and 'medical sequencing' will revolutionize clinical laboratory diagnostics as the foundation for the new era of personalized medicine.....Pathologists must take the lead in the application of genomics technologies, including whole [genome sequencing](#), laboratory technologies and personalized medicine."

As a critical first step in leading this charge, the BIDMC Department of Pathology, in collaboration with BIDMC's genetic counseling service, last year launched the Genomic Medicine Initiative, a first-of-its-kind compulsory program to prepare doctors-in-training to apply genomics and personalized medicine in their day-to-day practices.

"This is emerging as one of the most significant shifts in medical education in decades," says Saffitz, Chief of Pathology at BIDMC and Mallinckrodt Professor of Pathology at Harvard Medical School.

"Diagnostic Pathology is the medical specialty where the results of multiple diagnostic tests and other patient data are analyzed and

interpreted. Why should a patient's genotyping results be any different? We feel that it is our responsibility as the diagnostic enablers of clinical medicine to understand genomics information and to serve as primary consultants for physicians and patients who need to know how to interpret and act on this data."

The new BIDMC pathology curriculum addresses these key issues, with the new medical specialty built on three pillars: laboratory medicine, [genetic counseling](#) and health information technology. As Richard Schwartzstein, MD, Vice President for Education at BIDMC and a Faculty Dean for Medical Education at Harvard Medical School, explains, "The integration of genetic information will be the core of 'patient-centered' care."

The completion of the Human Genome Project in 2003 may have ushered in the new era of personalized medicine, but when it comes to genomic testing and applications of this new data, the medical profession has lagged far behind the technology and business communities.

"At the present time, no single discipline in medicine has developed a comprehensive approach to train a cadre of physicians who will be prepared to meet the coming challenge of [personalized medicine](#)," adds Mark Boguski, MD, PhD, an Associate Professor in the Department of [Pathology](#) BIDMC and the Center for Biomedical Informatics at Harvard Medical School. "As a result, control of personal genomics has shifted directly into the hands of consumers, with confusing results. We would like to ensure that, going forward, pathologists are the interpreters and integrators of genomic information."

Provided by Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

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