US and Scottish Health Professionals’ Attitudes toward DNA Biobanking

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Abstract

The authors used a fifteen item survey to canvass 200 health care professionals in the United States and Scotland about their attitudes toward the potential utility of a DNA biobank. Results indicate a broadly favorable opinion in both locations. This finding seems to support further development of such a tool.

Introduction

The authors define a DNA biobank as a repository of genetic information correlated with patient medical records. DNA biobanks may assist in the research and identification of genetic factors influencing disease and drug interactions, but may raise ethical issues. How healthcare providers perceive DNA biobanks is unknown. To determine how useful healthcare professionals believe DNA biobanks will be and whether these attitudes differ between private and socialized healthcare systems.

Methods

The authors surveyed 200 healthcare professionals, including research and non-research focused doctors, nurses and other staff from medical centers and independent practice in both the United States and Scotland. The survey included fifteen items evaluating general receptiveness toward biobanks, presumed usefulness of biobanks and perceived attitudes in recruiting patients for a biobank (Table 1).

Results

A total of 81 (45%) of 179 eligible participants responded: 41 from the U.S. and 40 from Scotland. Of these respondents, most (70%) were from academic centers. Results indicate that there is a broadly favorable attitude in both locations toward the creation of a DNA biobank (83%) and its perceived benefit (75%). This enthusiasm is tempered in Scotland when respondents are asked to evaluate their comfort in consenting patients for entry into a biobank; 16 of 40 respondents were uncomfortable doing so, representing a significant difference from those in the U.S. (p=0.001).

Conclusion

Despite systematic differences in healthcare practice between America and Scotland, health care professionals in both nations believe DNA biobanks will be useful in curing disease. This finding appears to support further development of such a research tool.

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