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GENOME MEDICINE’S CHALLENGE TO PRACTICAL WISDOM

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Genomic technology offers many potential benefits for the practice of medicine, including efficient work-up of genetic disorders, new opportunities for cancer care, risk assessment for common complex diseases, and guides to the safe and effective use of drug therapies. However, genomic testing will also provide unprecedented amounts of data beyond what is needed to address a particular clinical question – more than can reasonably be handled in routine medical care, and much of it lacking in health benefit. This information cascade challenges the practical wisdom of clinicians and points to important choices and trade-offs in the use of this innovative technology.

Dr. Burke is Chair of the Department of Bioethics and Humanities at the University of Washington, and adjunct Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology. She received a Ph.D. in Genetics and an M.D. from the University of Washington, where she completed a residency in Internal Medicine, and was a Medical Genetics Fellow. Dr. Burke’s research addresses the social, ethical and policy implications of genetics, including responsible conduct of genetic and genomic research, genetic test evaluation, and implications of genomic health care for underserved populations. She is director of the University of Washington Center for Genomics and Healthcare Equality and co-director of the Northwest-Alaska Pharmacogenomic Research Network. She is a member of the Institute of Medicine and a past President of the American Society of Human Genetics.

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