

More often than other biologic and medical specialties, the field of human and medical genetics has an impact that goes beyond technical and clinical aspects. The study of its history, including its relationship to the social and political climate in different countries and periods, needs more work. Issues of research in human genetics frequently go beyond the questions posed by biologic and medical facts. Although we are obtaining an increasingly better understanding of the structural and functional basis of heredity, such insights do not yet exist with regard to the unique function of the human central nervous system. The discrimination of genetic from social and other non-biologic factors and their interaction is particularly difficult to study and often raises problems. The Human Genome Project established a program of setting aside ~5% of its budget to consider ethical, social, and legal issues that are likely to be raised by emerging knowledge in human genetics.

The new section "Perspectives in Human Genetics" is designed to examine and analyze historical developments, research policy, controversial areas, and the current status of new areas of technology and their impact on research, clinical practice, and society. The aim of such articles is to provide information, pose questions, and reflect on the many novel problems that require exposition and discussion. The first contribution in this series, "To Reveal the Genomes" by Robert Sinsheimer, which deals with a key event in the history of the Human Genome Project, appears on the following pages. We urge our readers to suggest authors and topics that would fit this new addition to the *Journal*.

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