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**Response to the House of Lords Science and technology Committee report on Genomic Medicine  
(Published 7<sup>th</sup> July 2009)**

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges welcomes this report and endorses its findings without significant reservation, although we fear that some of the financial implications will prove challenging for the Government to fulfil in the current economic climate. The existence of a National Health Service in the UK should, if well used, allow the UK to take an international lead in this area.

The pace of change of our understanding of the human genome is unprecedented, and we predict that the NHS will have difficulty in keeping up with that change. The public can now easily identify new developments by searching the Internet, but they need suitably trained professionals to help them to interpret the increasingly complicated information that is available. We share the concerns expressed in the report about the potential for harm posed by unregulated genetic testing and the need for authoritative sources of information, online and in every doctor's surgery, to counter that possibility.

A well-informed public will expect NHS services that can deliver the new benefits.

The Royal College of Pathologists has recently set up a small working group to consider the technical aspects of the most cost-effective way to deliver new diagnostic tests based on the analysis of genes and their products. The RCPATH is also actively working with the Department of Health (England) to reform the training of non-medical scientists in the NHS to take account of these developments.

Training doctors to take advantage of these developments is a challenge for all the Medical Royal Colleges, as the Report clearly identifies. In the future, genetic counselling will be a task for all doctors, not just those in small specialist centres. It is not sufficient merely to adjust the training of new doctors, because the pace of change is so fast; existing practitioners will also need re-training at regular intervals to keep them up to date.

The Academy specifically notes and supports Recommendation 41:

*8.41. We recommend that the Royal Colleges of Pathologists, Physicians and General Practitioners, after consultation with other relevant bodies, should develop a joint national strategy for undergraduate and postgraduate education and training in genomic medicine, with a clear timetable for implementation.*

We look forward to working with the relevant national bodies to this end.

*End.*

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The Academy's role is to promote, facilitate and where appropriate co-ordinate the work of the Medical Royal Colleges and their Faculties for the benefit of patients and healthcare. The Academy comprises the Presidents of the Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties who meet regularly to agree direction.