

## **An exploration of clinical genetic counselors' interactions with commercial genetic testing laboratories**

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To explore genetic counselor perceptions of interactions between clinical genetic counselors and commercial genetic testing laboratories. Purposive subject recruitment was conducted via e-mail advertisement to the National Society of Genetic Counselors (NSGC) listserv. Participants who qualified for the study were practicing genetic counselors who work in a clinical setting at least 50% of the time, are involved in ordering or recommending genetic testing products, and attended the 2017 NSGC Annual Conference. Participants were interviewed by telephone using a semi-structured interview guide. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were coded and analyzed utilizing grounded theory methodology. In total, 22 practicing clinical genetic counselors were interviewed. Three main themes emerged: (i) education-based interactions are perceived to lack the potential for conflict of interest (COI) because of the clinically beneficial information that they provide; (ii) interactions without educational benefits are perceived as being more likely to create COI; and (iii) despite identifying COI as a potential impact of non-educational interactions, personal ordering practices are perceived as being free of marketing influence. Participants identified interactions with commercial genetic testing laboratories as necessary aspects of clinical practice. They articulated that they were able to provide improved patient care and conduct informed ordering after receiving educational information at events such as sponsored presentations. Thus, education-based interactions were not perceived to have the potential for COI. However, interactions that lack an educational component were viewed as outliers, more likely to cause bias by failing to provide participants with educational benefit. Despite the majority of participants identifying interactions that have the potential to create COI, they felt that their personal ordering practices remained uninfluenced. Participant responses in this study indicate a need for improved education and training on the subject of COI.