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**[Guidelines for return of results: how to communicate with participants who donate to biobanks](#)**

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The growth of large-scale genetic and genomic research using biobanks and archived datasets has further fuelled the debate over whether and how to discuss individual research results and incidental findings with research participants. In a special article published online this week in *Genetics in Medicine*, 26 researchers propose that biobanks should shoulder significant responsibility for managing the findings that arise from such research studies.

Susan M. Wolf and colleagues write that biobanks need to play a major role in setting up a system to handle these findings, whether arising at sites collecting participants' samples, the biobank where samples and data are stored, or in the research conducted elsewhere with these samples and data. If

biobanks are designed so that individuals who contribute specimens and data are identifiable, the authors maintain, then findings that are analytically valid, reveal an established and substantial risk of a serious health condition, and are clinically actionable, should be communicated back to the participants who consented to receive this information. Also recommended is that broader findings—such as those revealing an established and substantial risk that is of likely health, reproductive, or personal importance—may be offered back to consenting participants.

Wolf and colleagues urge that the question of return of individual results in biobank research be better addressed by researchers, their institutions, research funders, and authorities who oversee research practice, as well as the individuals involved in the research. These questions of whether to offer incidental findings and individual research results to research study participants are of wide and general concern, and this piece will be published in print, as part of the April special issue, alongside other articles and commentaries delving into similar issues.

**Author contact:**

Susan M. Wolf (University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA)  
Tel: +1 612 625 3406; E-mail: [swolf@umn.edu](mailto:swolf@umn.edu)

**Editorial contact:**

Jan McColm (Managing Editor, *Genetics in Medicine*, Bethesda, MD, USA)  
E-mail: [gim@acmg.net](mailto:gim@acmg.net)

**Media contact:**

Kathleen Beal (Director of Public Relations, American College of Medical Genetics, Bethesda, MD, USA)  
Tel: +1 301 238 4582; E-mail: [kbeal@acmg.net](mailto:kbeal@acmg.net)

**Press contacts:**

*For media inquiries relating to embargo policy for the journal, Genetics in Medicine:*

Neda Afsarmanesh (*Nature* New York)  
Tel: +1 212 726 9231; E-mail: [n.afsarmanesh@us.nature.com](mailto:n.afsarmanesh@us.nature.com)

Ruth Francis (*Nature* London)  
Tel: +44 20 7843 4562; E-mail: [r.francis@nature.com](mailto:r.francis@nature.com)

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