

## A Guide to Cancer Genetic Counseling

Reich, EW. Human Genetics Program, New York University School of Medicine, New York, New York USA. Counseling for a Hereditary Predisposition to Cancer.

Counseling for a hereditary predisposition to cancer has become an important sub-specialty of genetic counseling and requires sensitivity, extensive knowledge about both cancer and general genetics. Genetic counselors are specially trained, certified professionals who have the ability to interpret family histories, provide risk assessment, and guide patients through the decision-making process not only about whether to undergo testing, but also how to understand and follow a protocol for surveillance. Most important, too, are the implications of genetic testing not only for the patient but for the members of the extended family. Genetic counseling requires the provision of emotional support throughout this process as undergoing genetic testing, sometimes as the basis for surgical decisions, is almost always anxiety laden. Discussion of the content of the genetic counseling sessions, the presentation of the pros and cons of genetic testing, and the difficulties encountered by patients as they progress through this process will be addressed in detail. References will be made to protocols in the literature, recommendations made by professional groups and the individual practice of the author.