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**ADELPHI**  
GENETICS FORUM

*exploring heredity and society*

# ADELPHI REVIEW



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## **Editorial**

2026 is turning out to be a year of turmoil in the world so it's good to report that the Adelphi Genetics Forum is able to continue producing outstanding events.

The first will be our sixth biennial conference for secondary teachers being held once again at NOWGEN in Manchester. This has become an extremely popular occasion and this year we will include talks by some exceptional speakers on topics such as Epigenetics, Stem Cells and progress in treatment of Huntington's Disease. Tickets are limited but are still available on the 'Events' section of our website.

We then have our Annual Conference at the Royal Society in October on 'Complexity of Neural Function – the Brain in Charge' as outlined on the back page of this issue. Full details of all the talks will soon be available on our website.

On page 4, there is the latest report from CHASE Africa, recipients of an Artemis Trust grant. It includes some inspirational stories from rural Kenya on the struggles encountered by women, fighting and succeeding to be heard. We also have reports on conferences from organisations whom we support. It's good to see that in-person events are still to be found in this post-Covid era.

Finally, we have the latest in the series 'My Life in Genetics' featuring our trustee Dr Panagiotis Sergouniotis who explains what drives him and also reveals a most unique talent!

Enjoy this issue and I hope to see you later in the year in Manchester or London.

**Robert Johnston**

## **Progress report from CHASE Africa 1st January - 30 June 2025**

**Improving access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) information and services in the Tana River ecosystem, Kenya.**



CHAT Community Outreach

Project activities during the first half of 2025 have had to navigate multiple challenges. Some of the hurdles were long-standing issues which have been faced before, as well as new issues that have occurred during this reporting period. Despite the difficulties encountered, CHAT continued to successfully reach marginalised communities with sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) information and services and were able to exceed their targets for the 6-month period.

### **RECENT ACTIVITIES AND PROGRESS**

Three CORPs (Community Own Resource Persons) continue

to make household visits throughout the project area and to facilitate community dialogues focussing on SRHR (sexual and reproductive health and rights). Through door-to-door visits the CORPs provide tailored health education and counselling, distribute short-term contraceptives (oral pills and condoms), and identify and refer clients requiring long acting or clinical family planning (FP) methods to the nearest health facilities. As well as the door-to-door visits, a 20-day motor mobile health outreach was deployed, visiting 16 remote, marginalised communities to provide SRHR and other healthcare services.

## **CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED**

1. Frequent inter-community conflicts and cross-border tensions between Kamba and Somali herders creates insecurity in Garissa–Mwingi border areas. This led to temporary and recurrent closures of health facilities in those areas, and the restricted access to health facilities in insecure zones prevented CORPs from offering referrals. This has resulted in service gaps and reduced coverage of FP interventions. However, where service provision is interrupted due to closure of health facilities, back-pack outreaches delivering services to people’s homes have helped to bridge the access gaps during periods of unrest, to reach these underserved but needy communities.

2. Government health facilities in the project area suffer an irregular supply of FP commodities and frequent stockouts. This limits client access to their preferred FP methods and reduces trust in service reliability. As a last resort, CHAT provides commodities to fill supply gaps via CORPs, although it does not favour this approach as it promotes an unsustainable model. Instead, CHAT has continued to work closely with MoH Reproductive Health Coordinators to improve stock forecasting, supply chain monitoring and buffer stock planning, and advocate

for timely restocking of health facilities for a smooth service delivery.

3. National disruption due to ‘Gen-Z’ protests disrupted transport, closed public offices and halted services in some areas, affecting FP service delivery. Activities were paused temporarily, and service days were rescheduled post-protests.

4. Withdrawal of key USAID funding is likely to have an adverse impact on national FP commodity availability once current stocks are exhausted, but the immediate impact of the funding cuts has been the exit of contracted health workers. This has put strain on referral systems due to an increased reliance on government staff, and created increased pressure on back-pack CORPs to provide services.

5. Due to persistent vehicle mechanical challenges, CHAT was required to consolidate two planned 10-day motor mobile integrated health clinic outreaches into a single, extended 20-day outreach.

<b>Attendances for SRHR information and awareness raising</b>	<b>19 years and under</b>	<b>1216</b>
	<b>20 years and over</b>	<b>2032</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3248</b>

<b>Family planning prescriptions provided.</b>	<b>19 years and under</b>	<b>564</b>
	<b>20 years and over</b>	<b>863</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1427</b>

Out of the total family planning services provided (1427), the number of first-time users of modern contraceptives was 899, which demonstrates the positive impact of the project in educating people and changing attitudes towards family planning. The health outreaches maintain a core focus on FP services, strategically integrated with the delivery of other

essential primary healthcare interventions. In addition to family planning services provided, 2239 other SRH and primary health care services were also provided, including HIV testing and counselling, antenatal care, HPV vaccinations, cervical and breast cancer screening, immunisations and deworming, and basic curative treatment. These services act as strategic entry points for engaging clients in FP discussions and uptake.

## **CASE STORIES**

### **Lighting the Path: My Journey as a CORP with CHAT (As told by CORP Lucy, Kyuso – Mwingi North, Kitui County)**

I still remember it like it was yesterday—August 2017. That's when my community proposed me to work with CHAT as a Community Own Resource Person (CORP). I was both excited and anxious. At the time, I didn't know that I was stepping into a journey that would not only change the lives of others—but mine as well. Honestly, those early days were tough. The very community that had entrusted me soon became hostile, especially when I began talking about family planning. Resistance came from all corners, particularly from men who had never been exposed to information about contraception. Many saw it as taboo. Some even sent elders to warn me, telling me to stop misleading women. I felt discouraged—many times. But deep within, I knew I couldn't give up. You see, I come from this community. I had lived in the same reality they were living—where it was normal for a woman to have 10, 12, even 14 children. Poverty was everywhere. I remember seeing women carrying one baby on their back, breastfeeding another, with a swollen belly from another pregnancy. And no one questioned it. That was life. It wasn't until CHAT trained me that my eyes opened. I realized that this wasn't just about contraception—it was about dignity, health, and opportunity. I had been in the

dark too, only I had seen the light a little earlier. And I became determined to help others see it too. So, I started small—with my own neighbourhoods in Matooni and Marisi. The resistance was fierce, but I chose to focus on the hardest critics. And what a surprise—it was some of these very same men, the ones who had once shunned me, who later began escorting their wives to receive family planning services. Some even encouraged their daughters to consider long-term methods. That gave me so much hope. As trust grew, these communities began referring themselves. And what’s more touching —those who once spread rumours that I was “spoiling women” now recommend me to other villages. Their transformation still amazes me. Today, thanks to CHAT and its incredible supporters, I have grown more confident, fearless, and full of purpose. I’m now serving even more vulnerable communities along the Kitui–Garissa border—places like Kaseuni, Kasiluni, and Getine, where myths still thrive and conflict makes access difficult.



CHAT providing advice in remote locations

Looking back, I know one thing for sure: if I had listened to the doubters, our community would still be stuck in the same cycle of poverty and suffering. But because of the unwavering support from CHAT and its donors, we've started telling a different story — one of empowerment, health, and hope. And for that, from the bottom of my heart, I say thank you.

### **From Doubt to Determination: My Story of Change (As told by Karimi - a beneficiary, Kamatungu Village)**

If someone told me a few years ago that I'd be the one encouraging the women in my village to embrace family planning, I'd have laughed. Back then, I was one of the most resistant people you could meet on the subject. I didn't want to hear anything about it — especially from a stranger like Jonathan, who came around our village talking about things we'd never discussed openly before. I still remember that day.

He showed up with his backpack and confidence, asking to speak with us women about family planning. I wasn't rude, but I wasn't welcoming either. I kept my distance. In my mind, I thought: These are city things. They don't understand our lives. But things changed three months later. I had gone to the health facility for a regular check-up, and the nurse told me my blood pressure wasn't looking good. She advised that I monitor it frequently, and to my surprise, she referred me to Jonathan — the same man I had avoided — because he had a BP machine and worked in the community. I hesitated. But health is health, and I needed the help. So, I made the call. To be honest, that call changed everything. Jonathan welcomed me without judgment. Each time I went for the BP check, he'd talk to me about family planning—not forcefully, just gently, with patience. Eventually, I opened up to him. I told him how I got pregnant with my second child just months after delivering my first. It nearly broke me. My husband works far from home, and I was

left to carry the burden alone—emotionally, physically, and financially. I was drained. That’s when I decided to accept a long-term method—Jadelle, the 5-year option. For the first time, I felt like I had regained control over my life. I could breathe. I could focus on my small kiosk, on my little farm... on myself. And in that space of peace, I found something else: purpose. Now, the same women who used to visit me in the evenings for a chat or to buy something small from my kiosk, I began talking to them. When I noticed their interest growing, I’d call Jonathan. He’d come and talk to all of us—no pressure, just facts, real stories, and practical options. I became a bridge between my community and a better future. And you know what? The same ‘difficult woman’ Jonathan met years ago turned into one of his strongest allies. Because someone believed in empowering local people. Because donors like you supported an initiative that reached even our remote village. To me, family planning isn’t just about avoiding pregnancy—it’s about restoring dignity, giving us women a voice, a choice, and a chance to thrive. I now believe that every woman should be empowered to make decisions—not just depend on husbands or wait for permission to take care of herself. Jonathan always says I was like a spark that lit a fire of change across the village. Maybe he’s right. But what I know for sure is this: none of it would have been possible without the support behind him—from CHAT and their supporters, who lit the fire long before I caught the flame. Thank you—for changing my story, and through me, changing many more.

We thank the Trustees of the Artemis Trust for supporting this vital project to improve access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) information and services in the Tana River ecosystem, Kenya.

**PTNCE 2025 conference organised by  
The Polish Society for Human and Evolution Studies  
22-25 September 2025.  
Wroclaw, Poland,**

The conference “*Humans in Evolutionary Perspective*” was held in the University’s Botanical Garden, and all participants were granted free access to both the Garden and the Natural History Museum of the University of Wroclaw. The conference was officially opened by the Vice-Rector for Internationalisation, **Professor Patrycja Matusz**, and by the PTNCE President, **Professor Bogusław Pawłowski**. The conference brought together over 100 participants and was supported by the efforts of 10 volunteers – mostly local students. The annual PTNCE international conferences bring together an international community of scientists from diverse fields, including human biology, psychology, behavioural sciences, linguistics, public health, medicine, anthropology, archaeology, demography, animal behaviour and primatology. The overarching theme is broad, focusing on humans from an evolutionary perspective.

This year’s conference featured four distinguished plenary speakers, including two renowned geneticists. One of them, **Professor Nancy Segal** from the California State University, an expert in human behavioural genetics and twin studies, gave a talk entitled “***Evolutionary Applications of Twin and Adoption Research: Insights into Social Relatedness and Affiliation***”. Professor Segal focused on the role of emotional closeness in relation to genetic and shared environmental factors (e.g., adoptees raised together). Her findings consistently indicate a stronger influence of genetic factors, even in cases where monozygotic twins were raised apart and met only in adolescence or adulthood. The second plenary speaker, **Professor Mark Thomas**, from University College London, gave

a talk entitled “***Dairying, Diseases and the Evolution of Lactase Persistence in Europe***”, which was about different ideas related to the main selection pressures on lactase persistence that appeared in the relatively recent evolution of *Homo sapiens*. He claimed that comparisons of model likelihoods indicate that population fluctuations, settlement density, and wild animal exploitation—proxies for these drivers—provide better explanations of selection for lactase persistence in our species than does the extent of milk exploitation.

Another plenary speaker, **Professor Lisa Welling**, an evolutionary psychologist from Oakland University, presented a talk titled “***Hormones and Human Behaviour: Evolutionary Insights into the Role of Hormones in Mate Selection***”. Her talk explored how fluctuations in hormones such as testosterone, oestrogen and progesterone contribute to variation in attraction, mating behaviour, and mate preferences. She emphasized how an integrative approach that combines evolutionary theory, endocrinology, and psychological science can provide a richer understanding of human mate selection. The fourth plenary, entitled “***Origins of Art: Homo aestheticus in Papua and Beyond***”, was given by **Professor Piotr Sorokowski** from the University of Wrocław, a renowned researcher in cross-cultural, evolutionary psychology and anthropology. He has conducted extensive field studies among artists in hard-to-reach regions of Papua, Africa, and Oceania. He presented studies (in particular on Asmat artists of West Papua) designed to test the most common assumptions about the adaptive and social roles of traditional and indigenous art.

The fifth and final plenary was given by young researcher **Dr Michał Stefańczyk**, the winner of the PTNCE Award for Outstanding Young Researcher, who presented a talk, “***The***

## ***Origins of Sex Differences in Disgust Sensitivity – Evolutionary and Social Psychology Approaches to the Phenomenon***

In addition to the plenary lectures, the conference programme included nine thematic sessions of regular talks given by conference attendees covering a wide range of topics such as co-operation, mating strategies, cultural transmission, disgust and food preferences, perception and aesthetics, as well as language evolution. There was also a session of short “speed talks” featuring 10 concise presentations. Apart from that, a lively poster and networking session, with approximately forty posters, attracted considerable attention from participants.

The scientific diversity of the conference was reflected in many captivating presentations addressing unique aspects of human evolution and behaviour. Among the particularly thought-provoking talks were: cognitive processes underlying costly signalling in humans; ancestral storytelling (insights from hunter gatherers); cannibalism as a cultural trade-off; rivalry in disguise in the context of intrasexual competition; sexual behaviour as a mate retention strategy; adaptive functions of love (love as a “fertility device”); human olfaction and well-being; and mobility in human history and prehistory.

Beyond the academic programme, there were ample opportunities for socialising among the members to encourage scientific networking, sharing of ideas, and potential collaborations, particularly between the younger and more senior attendees. The participants also had an opportunity to take part in a guided tour of Wrocław’s Old Town and in a new social event introduced this year - named “PTNCE Talent Show”, where participants had a chance to show their musical or painting talents, in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere that fostered networking and community building within the Society.

At the end of the conference, **Professor Bogusław Pawłowski** invited everyone to join us next year for the 12th PTNCE conference in Białystok, Poland, which will be organized by **Professor Konrad Talmont-Kaminski**.

Overall, the conference successfully combined high scientific quality with an open, interdisciplinary spirit, encouraging dialogue across various fields of evolutionary research. The financial support provided by the *Adelphi Genetics Forum* contributed to broadening the conference's scientific scope by strengthening the representation of genetic themes within the traditionally diverse PTNCE program. Professors Nancy Segal and Mark Thomas enriched the meeting with state-of-the-art perspectives from human behavioural and evolutionary genetics. The conference also further strengthened the position of the Polish Society for Human and Evolution Studies as the leading platform for evolutionary scholars in Central and Eastern Europe.

### **Bogusław Pawłowski and Agnieszka Żelaźniewicz**



**Grants for conferences and workshops**

The Adelphi Genetics Forum makes awards of up to £1,000 to help meet the cost of organising and running conferences or workshops on topics relevant to the Forum's aims. We will, under special/exceptional circumstances, increase funding up to a maximum of £2,000, if the request is well justified.

Full details of the grants can be found on our website at:  
<https://adelphigenetics.org/grants-awards/conferences-workshops-grants/>

**The next deadline for grant submissions is:  
1st September, 2026**

**Conference Report of the 27th European Molecular  
Biology Laboratory PhD Symposium:  
Shaping Tomorrow  
20-27 November 2025  
EMBL Advanced Training Centre, Heidelberg**

Organised annually by EMBL PhD students, the symposium brought together 140 early-career researchers and internationally recognized scientists to explore how fundamental biological research can generate long-term benefits for health, the environment, and society. The programme was structured into three thematic tracks. *Advancing Health and Biomedical Solutions* examined how research is responding to the dual reality of rising chronic conditions and persistent infectious disease threats, highlighting how new technologies are reshaping the way we diagnose, understand, and ultimately prevent disease. *Navigating Planetary and Environmental Challenges* focused on the biological consequences of human-driven environmental change, reporting on research that helps quantify, interpret, and potentially mitigate the pressures acting on ecosystems and the planet. *Improving Resources and Food Systems* addressed the need to rethink resource use and food production in the face of finite inputs, population growth, and shifting demand, with a strong emphasis on work advancing resilience and sustainability.

The participants listened to new AI applications in biology including *in vitro* culture of model organisms and organoids, and a large-scale effort to map marine ecosystems, to cite some. The **Adelphi Genetic Forum's** support was key to deliver these topics, since it was used to cover the travelling costs and accommodation for one of our early-career speakers. The

symposium also focused on professional development and community-building. Workshops provided structured opportunities to build transferable skills, including sessions on appropriate language in peer review with Review Commons's chief editor **Dr Sara Monaco**, translating ideas into impact via start-ups with EMBLEM Technology Transfer GmbH, and a practical workshop on sharpening research direction. Additionally, a panel discussion, "*Beyond the bench: from fundamental research to global solutions*", reinforced the meeting's focus on translation pathways and long-term relevance. Students also had the opportunity to present their work through a poster session.

Facility tours complemented these sessions by giving participants a concrete view of the technologies and infrastructures that enable high-impact science at EMBL. On-site tours such as the Advanced Mobile Lab, GeneCore, and the Imaging Centre, linked the symposium themes to real-world platforms that accelerate discovery and support collaboration. Informal networking moments lowered barriers between career stages and research areas, such as the network event on the first day, the outing to Heidelberg Christmas market, and the symposium party featuring the EMBL DJ Club, which offered a relaxed and fun setting for new connections.

Overall, the symposium reinforced a clear takeaway: long-term scientific impact depends not only on excellent research, but also on the ecosystems around it: skills, networks, industry, and institutions that help discoveries travel from the bench to broad societal value.

**Victor Paton and Rama Abdulhamid**

**My Life in Genetics: An Interview with  
Dr Panagiotis Sergouniotis,  
Trustee of the Adelphi Genetics Forum**



Dr Panagiotis Sergouniotis

**You grew up in Greece. Tell us a little about your childhood.**

I grew up in a small rural town in Greece near Delphi, at the edge of an ancient olive grove. It was idyllic (until I developed an olivepollen allergy). The advice I remember most from school was: keep it short. I enjoyed maths and music, and there was a strong sense that if you commit to something, you never stop learning.

**What first convinced you to move into the field of ophthalmic genetics?**

I remember watching the announcement of the first draft of the human genome when I was in high school. Later, in medical school, I attended a series of lectures on genetics. Both stayed with me.

The eye has played a pivotal role in the evolution of human genetics. The first X-linked disorder (colour blindness), the first cancer-associated genetic disorder (retinoblastoma), and the first

mitochondrial disease (Leber hereditary optic neuropathy) were all ophthalmic conditions. This is no coincidence. Because the eye is optically accessible, ophthalmic conditions have been documented for centuries – and their hereditary nature was among the first to be recognised.

What drew me in was the unique position of the eye in genetics, neuroscience and medicine. Nowhere else in the nervous system can pathology be analysed so precisely, or linked to molecular mechanisms with such clarity. This made ophthalmic genetics feel like a field where scientific progress could have a direct impact on patients.

### **What are the prospects of using your research to cure blindness?**

My previous research helped define the genetic basis of several inherited eye conditions and improve diagnostic accuracy. It also contributed to developing a gene therapy now part of routine clinical care (voretigene neparvovec). But therapies of this kind aim to slow disease progression rather than reverse established vision loss.

Restoring vision requires a different approach. Stem cell-based retinal transplantation is one of the most promising avenues. We can already grow retinal tissue and transplant it safely. But the tissue we can currently produce lacks the cellular organisation needed for high-acuity vision. Understanding how to overcome that limitation – using insights from genetics – is where my work is now focused. We are not there yet, but the line of sight is clearer than it has ever been.

### **Who has had the greatest influence on your work?**

I owe a great deal to many people, and it is always difficult to single out individuals. What I can identify, though, are certain ideas that stayed with me. As a geneticist, one I return to most is that genes do not act in isolation – environment and

developmental timing are always part of the picture.

As a doctor, the greatest influences have been colleagues who taught me that you cannot always cure, but you can always help; and patients who taught me to ask not just what is wrong, but where someone is in their journey.

As a scientist and group leader, I have been fortunate to work with colleagues who have shown me what nature illustrates so clearly: a field of mixed flowers is richer and more resilient than a monoculture. Diverse teams – in background, in thinking, in perspective – are where the most interesting science happens.

**What role do you think the Adelphi Genetics Forum should play in the future?**

Most of us working in genetics are focused on making discoveries and translating them into improved health and wellbeing. But part of our community should focus on explaining what we are doing and why. A key question that genetics tries to illuminate – how much of our makeup is shaped by our genes, how much by our environment, and how much by our own will and determination – is not purely scientific. It is philosophical and social. The Adelphi Genetics Forum is well placed to sit at that intersection: connecting scientists, clinicians, educators, and the public; challenging misconceptions; and providing a space for open debate.

I am aware that this kind of engagement is resource-intensive and we are a small organisation. I would focus on deepening our school-related activities, strengthening our presence at science festivals, and building closer relationships with patient organisations, and policymakers in health and education.

**Tell us one thing about yourself which isn't widely known.**

I can juggle, and I can solve a Rubik's cube. I am working on solving three cubes simultaneously – whilst juggling them.

**Progress Educational Trust Annual Conference  
What Does Genomics Mean for Fertility Treatment?  
10 December 2025  
International Students' House, London**

PET is an independent, registered charity founded in 1992 to advance public understanding of ethics, law and science in the fields of human genetics, assisted reproduction and embryo/stem cell research. PET works to improve choices for people affected by infertility and genetic conditions, and to promote the responsible application of science through education and debate.

The choice of focus was inspired by the increasing number of genomics-related tests being marketed to patients and to those working in fertility clinics. The benefits and risks attached to these tests can be hard to understand, and explaining the results to patients can be challenging for fertility healthcare professionals. PET wanted to bring clarity to this area and in particular highlight areas where the science is not yet ready for clinical application. In the PET tradition, following introductory presentations the bulk of each session's running time was devoted to soliciting questions and comments from the audience.

The conference began with a welcome address by PET Director **Sarah Norcross**, who also chaired the first session.

**Session 1** focused on Expanded Carrier Screening: How Is It Used? What Are the Ethical Implications? and began with a talk from **Sara Levene** "*An Introduction to Recessive Carrier Screening*". The second speaker was **Professor Jackson Kirkman-Brown** with "*Gamete Donation and Testing: As Screening Expands, Does the Donor Pool Diminish?*". This

was followed by **Dr Heidi Mertes** “*Just Because You Can, Doesn't Mean You Should*”.

The final speaker was **Professor Cathy Herbrand** with “*Expanded Carrier Screening in the UK: Mind the Policy Gap*”. This covered the ethical implications of expanded carrier screening (ECS). Two different approaches for considering its use were discussed. First, preventing inherited disease, which has potential implications for assigning value to different types of lives and how society views disabled people. The second approach focused on how ECS may support patient autonomy and informed decision-making, but may also play into fearmongering and difficulties around risk perception.

The focus of **session 2** was *PGT-A as an IVT Add-On: 25 Years of Controversy* and was chaired by **Dr Deborah Cohen**. The session began with a talk from **Professor Karen Sermon** “*ESHRE's Guidelines and Good Practice Recommendations on PGT-A*”. The second speaker was **Dr Justin Chu** “*PGT-A: The Clinical Application of Research Data*”. This was followed by **James Lawford Davies** “*In a Class of Its Own? PGT-A, Liability and Litigation*”. The final speaker was **Professor Manuela Perrotta** on “*From Science to Sales: Marketing PGT-A in UK Fertility Care*”.

In this, the lawyer on the panel advised clinics to be open and transparent with patients – ensuring that patients understand risks and benefits, including in relation to experimental treatments – and to avoid misleading or overstating information.

The subject of **session 3** was *The Origins of Preimplantation Genetic Testing* and was presented by **Professor Alan Handyside**. The session was chaired by **Dr Philip Ball**. The audience learned of the origins of prenatal genetic diagnosis

and the policy discussions and law changes which were needed to see it made available to help families avoid passing on a serious genetic condition.

**Session 4** focussed on Polygenic Risk, Polygenic Scores, Polygenic Indices: What Are They? What Should Be Done with Them? and was also chaired by **Dr Philip Ball**. This session began with a talk from **Dr Emma Meaburn** “*The ABCs of PGSs: Unpacking Polygenic Scores*“. The second speaker was **Dr Dorit Barlevy** “*The Ethics of Polygenic Embryo Screening: At the Crossroads of Choice and Acceptance Amid a Landscape of Uncertainty*“. The final speaker in this session was **Professor Angus Clarke** with “*The Seduction of Polygenic Testing in PGT: Irresistible but Pointless?*“. Polygenic scores and polygenic risk are generally under-discussed. A few days prior to the conference, The Guardian reported that patients in the UK were attempting to circumvent the prohibition of PGT-P by sending genomic data related to their embryos to a US company for testing and the legal and ethical issues of such practice were vigorously debated in the session.



Session 5 of the PET Annual Conference

The focus of **session 5** was Donor Conception and Genomics: Sperm, Eggs, Embryos, Mitochondria and was chaired by **Professor Karen Sermon**. The session began with a talk from **Professor Stéphane Viville** “*How Far Is Too Far? Navigating Reasonable Limits in Genetic Screening of Donors*”. The second speaker was **Professor Dagan Wells** “*Mitochondrial Replacement Therapies for Avoidance of Disease and Treatment of Infertility*”. The next speaker was **Professor Michael Parker** “*Donor Conception and Genomics: Ethical Questions in Day-to-Day Practice*”. The session concluded with a presentation from **Debbie Kennett** “*Does Consumer DNA Testing Spell the End of Donor Anonymity?*”.

A number of ethical issues relating to donor conception and genomics were discussed. Professor Parker, with various case studies, illustrated the ethical and regulatory complexity of genetic testing in relation to donor conception. This approach was popular with the audience and there was a lot of interest from the audience in attending his Genethics Club meetings.

The final session of the day *Remarks from the Fertility Regulator* was chaired by **Sarah Norcross**, and the presentation given by **Julia Chain**.

The conference attracted 230 delegates, representing more than 121 organisations from a wide range of industries and backgrounds. Sponsorship from the *Adelphi Genetics Forum* gives an imprimatur of quality to the event and we are most grateful for their continued support. The next PET Annual Conference will be taking place on Wednesday 9 December 2026 and the theme will be the role of automation and AI in fertility-related treatment and research.

**Anneliese Burton**



Annual Conference  
**Complexity of  
Neural Function –  
the Brain in Charge**

Wellcome Trust Lecture Hall  
**The Royal Society**  
6-9 Carlton House Terrace, London  
**22 October, 2026**

Admission is **FREE**, but strictly by ticket, available  
from: [www.eventbrite.co.uk](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk) or  
The Executive Secretary, Adelphi Genetics Forum,  
19 Northfields Prospect, London SW18 1PE  
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