



Centre for Personalised Medicine Art Competition

Additional information for teachers

The Oxford Centre for Personalised Medicine art competition aims to engage young people with the opportunities and challenges of personalised medicine, and is now in its fifth year. We hope it would be an enjoyable stretch and challenge activity for any students interested in art or human biology, and may be of particular note for students thinking about studying medicine or art at university.

Our competition website, <https://cpm.ox.ac.uk/art-competition>, has all the details of this year's topic and how to apply, along with a downloadable poster and video that may be useful in introducing the competition to pupils. This additional information is intended to provide more context for teachers who might be interested in encouraging their class to take part in the competition.

2026-27 topic: talking to family about health and genetics

Genetic tests in one person can sometimes find risk factors that might be important for their family too. For example, a person with breast cancer might be found to have a variant in a *BRCA* gene that made them more likely to have cancer. Some of their close relatives might have the *BRCA* variant (so have a higher risk of cancer) too. If they don't know, they can't be tested, and so might miss out on options like earlier breast screening or preventative surgery.

In this situation, people are usually asked to share their genetic result with their family. Often their clinician might give them 'to whom it may concern' letters that they can hand out to their relatives. These contain a little bit of information about the genetic risk in question, and advice that the family member asks their GP to refer them to clinical genetics to talk about having a test.

In practice, it varies whether this happens. Some people will communicate a genetic risk throughout their family, sometimes even getting in touch with relatives they wouldn't usually speak to share the information. Other times, people really struggle to tell everyone who might be at risk. Very occasionally

this is because they don't want them to know, but much more often it's because it's a difficult thing to talk about and it never seems the right time. [This podcast episode](#) discusses some of the issues.

We would love to see artworks exploring ideas and challenges around talking to family about health and genetics. These could focus on practical aspects – for example, what might make it easier for a person to share information about genetic risks with their family? We would also welcome focus on conceptual aspects – for example, should a genetic risk be considered confidential to the person in whom it was discovered, or is it more appropriate to think of it as family information?

Thank you very much for encouraging your students to enter the competition.