

HEALTH | LETTERS

In Defense of DNA Testing (2 Letters)

JAN. 6, 2014

TO THE EDITOR:

Re “I Had My DNA Picture Taken, With Varying Results” (Dec. 31): Genetic testing and genomic medicine in general have proved their worth in the improvement of personal and public health and doubtless will continue to do so, but Kira Peikoff’s personal odyssey shows the role of uncertainty.

Uncertainty may rise in the short term as advances in technology reveal genetic variants whose clinical utility is unclear. Our understanding of genetic variation is nascent; varying risk estimates should be expected.

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TO THE EDITOR:

Ms. Peikoff raises concerns about the personal genomics industry. However, solutions lie not in stymieing commercial efforts through legal and regulatory hurdles, but in working with the industry to promote the collection of even more data in a responsible manner that respects consumers’ privacy and the public’s concerns.

Consistent quality and reporting standards are key. For its part, the industry must drop the pretense of “recreational genomics”: Today’s earwax-type gene may yield tomorrow’s drug metabolism data, and consumers need to be warned. As the industry matures, costs plummet and growing databases allow for robust analyses, we will all benefit from having consistent, reliable and actionable genomic information to keep us healthier and reduce health care costs.

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