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**American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics Expresses Appreciation  
to Dr. Michael S. Watson, FACMG: ACMG's Executive Director Will Depart ACMG  
at the End of 2019**

**BETHESDA, MD – October 1, 2019** | When Michael S. Watson, MS, PhD, FACMG became the first executive director of the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ACMG) in the year 2000, it would have been impossible to imagine the field of medical genetics today and the pivotal role ACMG would play in the evolution of the field. Now, as Dr. Watson prepares to depart ACMG later this year, ACMG conveys its enduring gratitude for his immense contributions to the ACMG, the ACMG Foundation for Genetic and Genomic Medicine and the grants he has managed while with ACMG. Mike has devoted himself to advancing the missions of the College and Foundation and it is no hyperbole to say that his hard work and commitment to the growth of ACMG have made the organization what it is today and that he leaves the College in a strong position to face the exciting challenges and growth of the field ahead.

ACMG President Anthony R. Gregg, MD, MBA, FACOG, FACMG said, "In this age of genomic medicine, it may be hard for some to remember when newborn screening was fragmented at a national level. Some states had no screening program or screened a minimum number of conditions. The same period in time was marked by prenatal screening that was at best targeted to one or a few ethnic groups. Medical foods were considered too expensive and were a luxury item for children with PKU and other metabolic conditions. Dr. Mike Watson was a key leader in the development of a nationally adopted newborn screening program. He guided one of the most important and first-ever collaborations between professional organizations. ACMG, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Academy of Pediatrics collaborated to establish laboratory standards when reporting cystic fibrosis variants and there was agreement on a uniform approach to panethnic prenatal carrier screening. He was a vocal advocate for the diagnosis and treatment of children with metabolic conditions. Mike did all of this and much more under the ACMG moniker. His collaborative leadership, tenacious spirit, focus and high intellect allows ACMG the worldwide status it enjoys today. We are the "go to" source for genetics and genomics information; the "go to" source for policy makers, patients and providers, because of Mike's leadership. We are proud members of ACMG. We can be proud to know that Mike leaves children with rare diseases, families seeking more information about their health risks and the nation positioned and equipped to take advantage of everything genomic technologies and their applications have to offer."

"I appreciate the many opportunities I've been given and the important initiatives that were completed during my employment as ACMG's Executive Director, said Dr. Watson. "I wish ACMG the best of success in the future."

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The ACMG Foundation for Genetic and Genomic Medicine has also recently announced that it will honor Dr. Watson with a new notable award, the [Dr. Michael S. Watson Genetic and Genomic Medicine Innovation Award](#).

R. Rodney Howell, MD, FACMG, past president of the ACMG and the ACMG Foundation, described the decision to hire Mike in 2000 as the College's first (and only) executive director saying, "As president of ACMG at the time, it was my job to bring him aboard. I can't imagine why he undertook such a remarkable challenge! We will, however, always recognize how lucky we are that he accepted our offer. Today ACMG is recognized as a leading organization in the entire field of medical genetics throughout the world. The accomplishments of ACMG are myriad and some work, like the development and standardization of newborn screening efforts, has been clearly lifesaving. The legacy that Mike leaves at ACMG as our founding CEO is remarkable and we are eternally grateful for where he has led us and all he has done."

Mike's leadership has been instrumental in many milestones for the College, including helping to establish ACMG as a professional membership organization and bringing laboratory geneticists into the ACMG—an achievement that unified the voices of clinical and laboratory geneticists in service of the entire medical genetics team and the patients for whom they care. Mike has overseen a dramatic expansion in the financial resources and staff of ACMG, represented medical genetics, medical geneticists and ACMG to numerous government and professional entities, and helped increase the recognition of medical genetics as a primary clinical and laboratory specialty and establish ACMG as the preeminent authority on medical genetics and genomics. He directed a Maternal and Child Health Bureau-funded project that published recommendations for a national uniform panel of conditions for newborn screening entitled "Newborn Screening: Toward a Uniform Screening Panel and System." Currently, Mike serves as project director of the Health Resources and Services Administration-funded National Coordinating Center for the Regional Genetics Networks (NCC) and the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development-funded Newborn Screening Translational Research Network (NBSTRN) Coordinating Center. He is also co-principal investigator on the National Human Genome Research Institute-funded Clinically Relevant Variants Resource grant, a subcontract of the Clinical Genome Resource (ClinGen) project. In 2011, the ACMG and ACMG Foundation presented Mike the inaugural Presidents' Award, to honor his contributions to the College.

Mike received his master's degree in medical genetics and his PhD in Physiology and Biophysics from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He completed his postdoctoral training at Yale University School of Medicine and is board certified by the American Board of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ABMG) in Clinical Cytogenetics and PhD Medical Genetics. Prior to becoming executive director of the ACMG and ACMG Foundation, Mike was Professor of Pediatrics and Director of

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the Clinical and Molecular Cytogenetics Laboratory at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri. He had also served on the board of directors of ACMG and chaired several ACMG committees.

Bruce R. Korf, MD, PhD, FACMG, current president of the ACMG Foundation and past president of ACMG said, "I have worked with Mike Watson over the years as a board member, College president, and now as Foundation president. His efforts to establish the College as the "go-to" authority on matters of medical genetics and genomics have been nothing short of Herculean. We all owe him an enormous debt of gratitude for his untiring efforts to advance our field, always with an eye towards what is best for the care of individuals and families who deal with rare or common genetic conditions every day."

Celebrations of Mike's contributions to the College and ACMG Foundation will be held during the ASHG annual meeting in October and in the Bethesda area later this fall. Dr. Watson will be succeeded by Maximilian Muenke, MD, FACMG who will become the ACMG CEO on October 7, 2019.

### **About the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ACMG) and ACMG Foundation**

Founded in 1991, the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ACMG) is the only nationally recognized medical society dedicated to improving health through the clinical practice of medical genetics and genomics. The ACMG provides education, resources and a voice for more than 2,300 biochemical, clinical, cytogenetic, medical and molecular geneticists, genetic counselors and other healthcare professionals, nearly 80% of whom are board certified in the medical genetics specialties. The College's mission is to develop and sustain medical genetics-related initiatives in clinical and laboratory practice, education and advocacy. Four overarching strategies guide ACMG's work: 1) reinforce and expand ACMG's position as the leader and prominent authority in the field of medical genetics and genomics, including clinical research, while educating the medical community on the significant role that genetics and genomics will continue to play in understanding, preventing, treating and curing disease; 2) to secure and expand the professional workforce for medical genetics and genomics; 3) to advocate for the specialty; and 4) to provide best-in-class education to members and nonmembers. *Genetics in Medicine*, published monthly, is the official ACMG peer-reviewed journal. ACMG's website ([www.acmg.net](http://www.acmg.net)) offers resources including policy statements, practice guidelines, educational programs and a 'Find a Genetic Service' tool. The educational and public health programs of the ACMG are dependent upon charitable gifts from corporations, foundations and individuals through the ACMG Foundation for Genetic and Genomic Medicine.

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