The Bank Where Doctors Can Stash Your Genome

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Genomic sequencing might be more common in medicine if doctors had a simple way to send for the test and keep track of the data.

That's the hope of Coriell Life Sciences in Camden, New Jersey, a startup that grew out of a partnership between the Coriell Institute for Medical Research and IBM. The company wants to facilitate the process of ordering, storing, and interpreting whole-genome-sequence data for doctors. The company launched in January and is now working with different health-care providers to set up its service. "The intent is that the doctor would order a test like any other diagnostic test they order today," says Scott Megill, president of Coriell Life Sciences. The company would facilitate sequencing the patient's DNA (through existing sequencing companies such as Illumina or Ion Torrent), store it in its so-called gene vault, and act as the middleman between doctors and companies that offer interpretation services. Finally, "we will return the genetic result in the human readable form back to the electronic medical record so the doctor can read it and interpret it for the patient," says Megill.

"You need a robust software infrastructure for storing, analyzing, and presenting information," says Jon Hirsch, who founded Syapse [1], a California-based company developing software to analyze biological data sets for diagnosing patients. "Until that gets built, you can generate all the data you want, but it's not going to have any impact outside the few major centers of genomics medicine," he says.

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