



## An enduring partnership built on mentorship and collaboration

Mentorship and collaboration are both fundamental to academic medicine. They're also central themes in the longstanding professional relationship between Mass General Brigham medical geneticists Robert Green, MD, MPH, a senior researcher at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Nina Gold, MD, an early-stage faculty member at Massachusetts General Hospital.



*Robert Green, MD, MPH  
and Nina Gold, MD*

Their connection began in the 2009-2010 academic year, when Dr. Green published the world's first randomized trial examining the medical, behavioral and economic outcomes of disclosing genetic susceptibility. Dr. Gold was beginning her first year as a medical student at Harvard Medical School. She had already written a blog describing her ambition to acquire "the scientific knowledge necessary for understanding the human genome's expanding role in health care—as well as the compassion and thoughtfulness to help promote the most ethical use of this new technology."

While waiting for a taxi in her first-year dormitory, Dr. Gold picked up an issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine* that included Dr. Green's article. "This is really fascinating," she thought to herself.

A few years later, as a fourth-year medical student, Dr. Gold landed an elective research rotation with Dr. Green's [Genomes2People research program](#) at the Brigham. Rather than waiting for Dr. Green to assign an ongoing project to her, Dr. Gold went to him with an ambitious idea of her own. He gave her the green light to lead a project that resulted in an important 2016 publication tracking the medical impact of genetic markers in the famous Framingham Heart Study.

After completing a pediatrics residency and fellowship at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Dr. Gold returned to Boston in 2019 to become an attending physician in medical genetics and metabolism at Mass General. Dr. Green invited her to collaborate on the [BabySeq Project](#), the world's first National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded trial detecting and [disclosing genomic risks in healthy infants](#).

They have since continued working together, publishing multiple papers and launching Dr. Gold's faculty career through a prestigious NIH Mentored Clinical Scientist Development Award to investigate the prevalence and penetrance of genes associated with treatable genetic disorders in several health system biobanks. It should come as no surprise that Dr. Green is serving as her mentor and collaborator on this study.

"In academic medicine, there's a lot of unwritten information about everything from framing grants and papers to negotiating the political forces within a division or department," Dr. Green said. "We all tend to learn about these things through trial and painful error. So when you have the chance to pass on some of that knowledge to someone with so much promise, energy and talent, it's extremely gratifying to help them launch their own independent career."

While Dr. Green is well-known as a physician-scientist in genomics with nearly 500 publications and a charismatic speaker whose work is regularly featured in national and international media, Dr. Gold appreciates the opportunity to see a more personal side of him.

"What's remarkable about Robert is how closely he has advised me at every step of my career and how thoughtful and authentic our conversations are," she said. "I feel like he truly understands my values as an individual, a scientist and a physician, and he helps me to meet the goals I've set for myself."

Over time, the relationship between Drs. Green and Gold has naturally evolved to become less about mentoring and more about collaboration. The two don't always agree, which Dr. Green encourages as healthy growth.

"On any given topic or choice that she faces, my job is to offer my opinion and its rationale. At this stage, I frequently encourage her to seek other opinions as well and then support her as she makes up her own mind," he said. "I've watched her become more confident and more collaborative over time, and I'm proud to see her building her own teams and now mentoring junior people of her own."

When it comes to mentoring her own trainees, Dr. Gold noted, she has learned from one of the best. And she regularly applies those lessons in interacting with her mentees.

"I try to make myself available to my mentees, identify what their goals are and help them get to the next step in a way that feels right for them," Dr. Gold said. "These are all skills I've learned from Robert."

"Finding a good mentor isn't always easy, even in a system like Mass General Brigham that has so many resources," Dr. Gold continued. "I feel so fortunate to have found someone who has been such a wonderful champion for my career and such an important teacher and friend."

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