

ALLERGY

IN RESPONSE TO OVEREXAGGERATED PREDICTIONS

18.09.2009

Hirschhorn writes in the N Engl J Med 360;17 April 23, 2009:

In response to the skeptics, I offer a new bet. I predict that by the 2012 ASHG meeting, genome-wide association studies will have yielded important new biologic insights for at least four common diseases or polygenic traits “and that efforts to develop new and improved treatments and preventive measures on the basis of these.

I bet there will not be even one new therapy derived from GWAs but there will be an ongoing debate about hundreds of “positive” associations.

My favorite scenario: we will have to give up the current disease nosologies – at least in asthma and COPD (for asthma see the earlier Lancet interview with Martinez, for COPD see the current ERS issue) as these are largely based on organ morphology and symptoms but not on genetics and pathology.

If we admit that Joel needs to secure his further funding by the above NEJM editorial, there seems to be nevertheless an economic misunderstanding. Pharmaceutical research is funded by other sources than academic research – overcoming much higher hurdles.

Even worse also a trend in Germany away from personalized medicine – for example specific immunotherapy based individual readout is getting difficult if impossible [by new laws](#).