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Matthias did his postdoc at NIH. The family grew and I looked into medical journalism as a job option. I gathered experience as a freelance writer for 2 German medical journals covering clinically relevant molecular genetic news – we are talking about the time when the genes for erythropoietin and the granulocyte stimulating factors were discovered! We very much enjoyed the extended informal professional and family interaction at and around NIH and were looking forward to joining the international atmosphere at EMBL. Freelancing turned out to be very difficult from Heidelberg and with the little one starting in the local kindergarden I 'jumped' when I was offered a job in the training program for 'Human Genetics'. It became formally established as a medical subspecialty, like gynecology or pediatrics in 1995. The 5-year training covers genetic counselling, cytogenetics and molecular genetics in addition to clinical training.

In 2000, Matthias' lab in EMBL's Gene Expression Programme had developed a specialized cDNA microarray – the human 'iron chip' – and was looking for a clinical partner to test its clinical applicability. At that time I was responsible for the local hemochromatosis out-patient clinic at the University. So I joined EMBL for 2 years as a Medical Research Officer for a pilot study. I obtained approval for the study from the local Ethics committee, recruited patients and control probands and in the lab established protocols for RNA extraction, labelling, hybridization and data analysis. This work was supervised and greatly supported by post-doc Martina Muckenthaler and the stimulating input from all group members and facilities at EMBL. The human 'iron-chip' proved to be specific, very sensitive and reliable – the mouse counterpart meanwhile has produced new long-sought insights into pathways of iron metabolism.

I have very much enjoyed this exposure to basic research and the enthusiasm at EMBL with the addition of the different national flavours and was so sorry to leave! I sat the board exam in Human Genetics and finally started to do what I had had in mind since Münster . . . I settled into a private practice as a Human Geneticist. The practice offers Genetic Counselling in combination with a molecular diagnostic lab for prenatal, postnatal molecular analysis, including predictive testing for familial malignancies.