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Dr. Drayna received his B.A. from the University of Wisconsin in 1976, and his PhD from Harvard University in 1981. He did postdoctoral research at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute at the University of Utah, where he constructed the first full-length genetic map of a human chromosome (the X chromosome), and performed a number of disease gene linkage studies. He then spent 15 years in the San Francisco Bay area biotechnology industry, where he worked on genetic aspects of human genes involved in cholesterol and lipid metabolism, and identified the gene responsible for hereditary hemochromatosis, an iron overload disorder, that represents the most common disease gene in Caucasians.

In 1996 Dr. Drayna moved to the NIH as a Visiting Investigator at the NHGRI. He joined the NIDCD in 1997 and since then has focused on applying the tools of human genetics and genomics to a range of topics that span the mission of the institute, including disorders of auditory pitch perception, variation in the sense of taste, and disorders of voice and speech. Dr. Drayna currently serves as the Chief of the Laboratory of Communication Disorders at the NIDCD, where his research focuses on the genetics and neuroscience of stuttering.