

Should scientists be allowed to genetically alter human embryos?

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Scientists have at their disposal a way to explore the possible prevention of genetic diseases before birth. But should they? Currently, the most promising path forward involves editing the genes of human embryos, a procedure rife with controversy. An article in *Chemical & Engineering News* (C&EN), the weekly newsmagazine of the American Chemical Society, parses the explosive issue.

Britt E. Erickson, a senior editor at C&EN, reports that at least one team of scientists has already published a study on altering disease-related [genes](#) of [human embryos](#). The experiment was largely unsuccessful, but it stoked fears that such research on embryos could lead to potentially dangerous or unethical applications. Would parents start demanding designer babies engineered to be smarter or more attractive? What would be the long-term consequences of changing people's genes before they're born?

Without answers yet to these critical questions and others, many European countries have banned gene editing of human reproductive cells. In the U.S.—where federal dollars cannot go toward this type of work—and in China, scientists are allowed to pursue this type of research. But the landscape is likely going to change as scientists, ethicists and lawmakers hash out a path forward.

More information: [Altering the Code of Life - cen.acs.org/articles/93/i26/Ed...yo-Genes-Raises.html](http://cen.acs.org/articles/93/i26/Ed...yo-Genes-Raises.html)

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