

China tightens rules on genetic research after designer-baby scandal

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Chinese scientist He Jiankui sparked an international outcry after claiming to have altered the genes of babies

China has announced regulations to curb the smuggling of human organs and tighten oversight on the use of human genetic materials in research months after a Chinese scientist caused a global outcry by claiming that

he gene-edited babies.

The announcement comes as He Jiankui's controversial experiment continues to transfix the [scientific community](#), with researchers saying the procedure may significantly affect [life expectancy](#).

The high-profile scientist announced in November that the world's first gene-edited babies—twin girls—were born that month after he altered their DNA to prevent them from contracting HIV by deleting a certain gene.

The regulations published Monday said international organisations that collect, store or use human genetic resources to carry out [scientific research](#) without proper permissions will be fined up to five million yuan (US\$722,600).

The penalty was double for foreign organisations conducting research using China's genetic resources.

Chinese and foreign researchers will have to register the [human tissues](#), organs and other genetic materials needed for experiments with the Science and technology administration under the State Council, China's cabinet, according the rules that will come into effect from July 1.

The new rules also include fines for scientists or institutions that collect human genetic materials without consent or by coercing donors.

The government can stop work carried out without proper authorisation and confiscate genetic materials.

Scientists or institutions can also be fined 5 to 10 times the amount of "illegal income" earned from unauthorised research and be banned from their field of work for up to five years.

A lifetime ban could be placed on scientists "if the circumstances are particularly serious", the regulations added.

He Jiankui has been placed under police investigation, the government ordered a halt to his research work and he was fired by his Chinese university.

The provincial government probe in January found He had "forged ethical review papers" and "deliberately evaded supervision", the official Xinhua news agency reported.

There has been no news of the scientist since then.

The [regulation](#) announced also bans buying or selling human organs, tissues and other [genetic resources](#) and offenders will be punished with a fine of up to 10 million yuan.

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