

## Embryo editing experiment continues to roil scientists

In the wake of the first ever report that scientists have edited the genomes of human embryos, experts cannot agree on whether the work was ethical. They also disagree over how close the methods are to being an option for treating disease.

The work in question was led by Junjiu Huang, a gene-function researcher at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, China. His team used a technique called CRISPR/Cas9 to cut and replace DNA in non-viable embryos that could not result in a live birth because they were created from eggs that had been fertilized by two sperm. They published a paper in *Protein & Cell*, confirming rumours that had been circulating for months that scientists were applying such gene-editing techniques to human embryos.

In March, the rumours prompted calls for a moratorium on such research: work in human embryos is contentious because, in principle, any genetic changes will be passed to future generations, a scenario known as germline modification.

But a moratorium may be an unrealistic goal. Modifying human embryos is legal in China and in many US states, although the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) forbids the use of federal funds for such research. Asked whether Huang's study would have been allowed under its rules, the NIH says that it "would likely conclude it could not fund such research" and is watching the technology to see whether its rules need to be modified.

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Ethics of embryo editing paper divides scientists](#)**