Are designer babies really in the near future?

Ever since in vitro fertilization made it possible for parents to select embryos with the best genetics, precisely-engineered progeny have been a big fear. And now that a powerful gene-editing technique has been used on human embryos, it's fine to get a little freaked out. So let's talk about 21st century trust fund babies with privilege notarized onto their DNA, medical mutants with genetic mistakes that will be passed on for generations, and armies of super soldiers with genetically engineered immunity to arsenals of chemical and biological weapons. But—here's the important bit—let's not leave out the hope of eradicating thousands of diseases, and the potential to make many pharmacological treatments obsolete.

Science needs room to figure out exactly what this technology is capable of doing. Right now, researchers have a ton of potential on their hands, but not a lot of agreement about how far that potential reaches.

Figuring out the efficacy and safety of embryonic gene editing means years *and years* of research. Boring research. Lab-coated shoulders hunched over petri dishes full of zebrafish DNA. Graduate students staring at chromatographs until their eyes ache. Western blot. Occasionally a paper will come along with some exciting news, with caveats that the results are too species-restricted and laboratory-dependent to mean much more than, "Hey guys, still working on it, and making progress!"

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: Read this before you freak out over gene-edited superbabies