

White House asks scientists to hold off on editing the human genome

Scientists should hold off on experiments that could permanently alter people's DNA and pass the changes along to future generations, the [White House said](#) Tuesday. It will take years of experiments – generations, even – to fully understand the effects of such changes, even if they are made with the intent of curing inherited disease, the White House chief science adviser says in a blog posting.

“The Administration believes that altering the human germline for clinical purposes is a line that should not be crossed at this time,” Dr. John Holdren, director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, says in the post.

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and the National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine) said last week they'd hold an international meeting this fall for discussion of the issue. Such genetic engineering techniques are called germline editing, meaning they could alter DNA that is passed from parent to child.

One hope for germline editing would be to cure inherited diseases such as cystic fibrosis or Huntington's disease, changing the gene forever so parents do not pass the mutation to their children. But Holdren argues that the unknown side-effects could be dangerous.

“It is important that the NAS' international summit fully explore the implications of germline editing for the current generation and generations to come across the globe, as well as the potential for alternative technologies that do not require germline alteration to deliver similar medical promise.”

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Gene-Editing: Hold Off For Now, White House Says](#)