

## Public discussion on germline editing vital, but what should be discussed?

Human germline genetic modification, which involves making genetic changes that will be passed on to future generations, is once again in the news.

Various commentators, including the authors of “Don’t edit the human germ line” have called for an open public discussion. I find this commendable! Unfortunately, despite all the articles and comments published recently, it is not clear: (i) where the public discussion should take place; (ii) what exactly the public discussion should focus on; and (iii) who should participate in the public discussion.

As to the “what”: If the public had to rely on the media reports of the last few weeks to know what the issues are, they might be confused. Although nearly every article includes such terms as “ethical” and “ethics,” the ethical issues are not clearly described. The main reason for opposing research on germline modification appears to be concerns about medical safety. However, there are also concerns about potential social harms. One such concern is that germline modification may lead to [genetic enhancement](#).

This invites the following questions: Should the public discussion focus just on medical/health safety issues or also on social/societal safety? Importantly, should the public assess whether non-therapeutic genetic enhancements are desirable? If yes, should that discussion be limited to germline genetic enhancement or also entail somatic genetic enhancement?

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post:** [Let’s talk about the ethics of germline modification](#)