Is CRISPR too dangerous to use in human embryos?

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

In just the past nine months, venture capitalists have plunked down more than $200 million in start-up companies developing an innovative gene-editing technology known as CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Palindromic Repeats). In 2014, *MIT Technology Review* touted this gene-editing technology as "the biggest biotech discovery of the century."

At the very least, CRISPR (more formally known as CRISP-Cas9) is the most important innovation in the synthetic biology space in nearly 30 years. Measured against any benchmark — such as the number of patents and scientific publications or the amount of government funding and private sector funding – interest in CRISPR has skyrocketed since 2013.

Despite its rather innocuous-sounding name (pronounced "crisper") and its potential life-changing medical applications, CRISPR has become the center of an intense debate about the future of synthetic biology. Some, such as my colleague Vivek Wadhwa, have called for a global moratorium on the gene-editing technology, due to ethical and safety concerns. From editing microbial DNA in lab test tubes, it's a slippery slope to editing human DNA in living cells. "No one is prepared for an era when editing DNA is as easy as editing a Microsoft Word document," says Wadhwa.

The Center for Genetics and Society has even put together a briefing of seven key reasons why genetically modified humans could be so dangerous. Point No. 1? "Profound health risks to future children." Messing around with the genetics of an unborn child is serious business.

Read full, original post: Everything you need to know about why CRISPR is such a hot technology