

How did 'CRISPR' get its name?

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

A new gene-editing technology has been relentlessly hyped over the past year, and it goes by a catchy if rather incongruous acronym: CRISPR.

The acronym emerged out of email exchanges in 2001 between two microbiologists: Francisco Mojica of the University of Alicante in Spain, and Ruud Jansen, then at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. A team led by Dr. Jansen is believed to be the first to use it in print the following year, in the journal [Molecular Microbiology](#).

CRISPR was created to simplify a welter of acronyms that had been proposed by geneticists to label a family of repetitive DNA sequences at the heart of the new biotechnology. In [one early email](#), Dr. Jansen complimented Dr. Mojica on the “snappy” coinage. Two other alternatives, SRSR and Spidr, were deemed “less crispy.”

As the CRISPR terminology spreads beyond the lab, it's possible that the verb could mutate. If CRISPR is treated like “crisper,” then the “-er” suffix could be removed to make the verb “crisp.”

That is what happened with “laser,” introduced in 1960 as an acronym for “light amplification by the stimulated emission of radiation.” Just two years later, “laser” had spawned the verb “lase.” Similarly, “Taser,” a playful acronym for “Tom Swift’s electric rifle” (a weapon from an old adventure novel), begat “tase.”

Read full, original post: [‘CRISPR’ Breaks Out Of the Lab](#)