

What role does gene editing have to play in abortion debate?

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Activists on both sides of the abortion debate now have a common enemy — the use of a powerful new gene editing technology to tinker with the human race.

That may seem like an idea from a sci-fi flick, but it's already here. The gene-editing technique is already used in research and has the potential to modify human DNA with unprecedented ease in the not-too-distant future. British regulators recently approved limited experiments in human embryos.

The technology holds promise to cure diseases like cystic fibrosis or sickle cell and even revive extinct species. But critics fear it could also be harnessed to craft “designer babies,” who are more intelligent, beautiful or athletic and to “edit” embryonic cells to change an inherited trait forever.

Those dystopian prospects have aligned U.S. groups long at odds: The anti-abortion Susan B. Anthony List, Family Research Council and the Center for Bioethics and Culture oppose gene editing in embryos. So do abortion rights groups like Our Bodies Ourselves and the leadership of the Pro Choice Alliance for Responsible Research, albeit for very different reasons.

They're not alone in raising concerns. Scientists and policymakers around the world were drawn up short last April after Chinese researchers reported they had used the technology, called CRISPR-Cas9, to edit the genes of human embryos for the first time. The Obama administration issued a statement a short time later opposing such research. The National Academy of Sciences convened experts earlier this year to begin looking at the ethical, legal and social questions of editing the genes of human embryos.

Read full, original post: [Gene editing: The next frontier in America's abortion wars](#)