CRISPR's high costs may limit development of gene therapy drugs

The ruckus over the CRISPR gene-editing system hides a dark reality: its high cost may make it unaffordable and questions remain whether most insurance companies will pay for it….

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"The cost isn't coming down," said Mark Trusheim, director of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's NEW Drug Development Paradigms, a think tank working on the problem of how we will pay for expensive new drugs. "Companies will say, 'We are developing these medicines, just pay us'; insurers will say, 'We can't afford it.'"

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Editas Medicine plans to use CRISPR-Cas9 to treat various diseases, including Leber congenital amaurosis…But in its annual report, Editas noted "significant uncertainty" on whether payers would cover the treatment. In fact, a handful of insurance companies…have issued policy documents that exclude gene therapy from coverage, a move that experts say establishes policy against paying for CRISPR-based therapeutics.

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"Companies will charge whatever the market will bear," [said Tania Bubela, a law and policy expert]. "I'm not even sure that many of these gene therapies will work, and not all medicine is worth the price." But if these technologies become broadly used, especially in altering T cells for cancer, payers won't meet the demands of steep prices, and Bubela predicts that "the system implodes under its own weight."

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: Who will pay for CRISPR?