

Human gene-editing debate: ‘We all need to educate ourselves’

[Editor's note: Charles Sackerson is a biology lecturer at California State University Channel Islands.]

In 1973, biotechnologist Herbert Boyer and geneticist Stanley Cohen published their work on the first recombinant DNA — a DNA molecule pieced together, by design, in a test tube.

The response among the leading scientists in the field was to halt such work for nearly two years while the implications and ethics of recombinant DNA could be worked out. Over time, guidelines emerged regarding what you can and can't do with recombinant DNA — guidelines that have served us well for 35 years.

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In gene editing, the DNA is manipulated directly in living cells, not in test tubes. The cells actually do the work, and they can be stimulated to make essentially any desired change in a gene...

We all need to educate ourselves about this breakthrough and be involved in the ethics debate, especially because controversies over recombinant DNA are not really resolved in the public mind.

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If CRISPR engineering of the germ line could eliminate a tragic disease from a family line once and for all, many would say “go for it!”

But many would draw a line between somatic and germ line manipulation. And even more would oppose engineered enhancements.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Ethics of gene editing: A debate for generations](#)