

## Why personal genetics company Helix sparks intense criticism

It can't be good when America's most famous cardiologist, one with 114,000 Twitter followers, posts to social media that your product's value is exactly "0." Nor it is a great thing when comedian Stephen Colbert makes your industry a laughingstock on late-night TV, calling it "total bullshit."

That's what happened this month to Helix, the high-profile spinout of gene-sequencing giant Illumina, which created the first online DNA test store where anyone can shop for genomic insights by submitting a saliva sample.

The problem isn't the tests that tell you about your ancestry or whether you're a carrier of beta thalassemia. Those are based in solid science. What's drawing critics is how scrolling through Helix.com has quickly become a little like visiting the [Sharper Image](#) of DNA. But instead of air purifiers, bacon toasters, and other electronic gadgets that no one really needs, people with money to burn can spend \$149 on a scarf whose pattern is personalized using their genes, DNA diet apps, or even genetically influenced wine recommendations.

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"We are keeping our eye on what is going on," says Carolyn Hann, an attorney specializing in health marketing in the agency's advertising practices division. "We recognize that in the [direct-to-consumer] market the science is evolving, and we don't want to impede innovation, either."

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [How to Spend \\$1,900 on Gene Tests Without Learning a Thing](#)**