

CRISPR as a ‘medical sleuth’: Gene-editing tool could detect Zika, Ebola and cancer

Some of the world’s leading CRISPR labs have, independently, tweaked CRISPR — adding bursts of light here and rings of DNA there — in ways that could make it even more of a research powerhouse and, possibly, a valuable medical sleuth, able to detect Zika, Ebola, and cancer-causing viruses, or a cell’s history of, say, exposure to toxins.

The inventions, which, like CRISPR itself, have been given clever acronyms — DETECTR, CAMERA, and SHERLOCK — show that scientists have yet to exhaust CRISPR’s talents. The technology is beginning to look like a Swiss army knife (we [told you](#) that was the best metaphor) rather than a mere Word editor.

In fact, its potential utility — and profitability — as a molecular diagnostic tool and biosensor are enticing enough that the inventors of the three new uses of CRISPR have all filed for patents on them.

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[E]ven as [companies](#) and [universities](#) gear up to test CRISPR to cure diseases in people, its unplumbed depths still hold unwelcome surprises: one CRISPR system being eyed as a therapeutic might have previously unsuspected and possibly dangerous effects.

“We’re finding more and more creative ways to make use of these tools, catching up with the diverse applications” that nature has found for CRISPR, said biologist David Liu of Harvard University and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, who led [the CAMERA study](#).

Read full, original post: [With new CRISPR inventions, its pioneers say, you ain’t seen nothin’ yet](#)