

Viewpoint: Gene editing in humans should leave 'no room for suspicion' of 'closed door' research

The Royal Society has recently published the results of an [extensive survey of the attitudes of the general public to genetic modification](#). This sent my mind back to 1990, when the human fertilisation and embryology bill was going through parliament.

The emphasis, at least in the House of Lords, where the bill started, very soon switched from remedies for infertility to the new concept of eliminating some heritable diseases...

I remember being astonished by how little this had to do with infertility, which was, after all, in the title of the bill, and what the committee I chaired had been set up to consider.

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The motivating force behind the survey was the thought that the new possibilities of curing disease by genetic modification could be of benefit to large numbers of people, many of whom suffered from conditions hitherto untreatable. It is therefore essential that these new possibilities should be widely understood and that there should be no room for suspicion that research is being carried out behind closed doors or that there is help available to which no one has access.

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Many of those surveyed expressed the hope that such regulation should be global; however, that seems to me pure fantasy. Think of the difficulties in establishing global agreement on the management of pollution. In this case, we must simply try to regulate for ourselves and hope that, if we can get it right, others will follow.

Read full, original post: [We need to use gene editing wisely but also embrace its vast potential](#)