How new technologies are ‘disrupting’ human reproduction

[On December 4], news of CRISPR-engineered babies launched a firestorm of debate on the future of human reproduction.

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But even as scientists, ethicists, and the general public struggled with the implications of a fundamentally-altered reproductive future, other teams released results that also have the potential to disrupt reproduction—not for genetic treatment or enhancement, but to help those who cannot get pregnant produce healthy, living babies.

In one study released in Nature, a team engineered a placenta-like structure inside a test tube. An ephemeral and often forgotten tissue, the placenta is the critical link between the mother and fetus, providing oxygen and nutrients for the developing baby. Failure of the tissue can lead to miscarriages and stillbirths. The “mini-placenta” mimicked its biological counterpart so well that it fooled an off-the-shelf pregnancy test, and it’s now survived for a full year inside its petri dish.

In another case published in The Lancet, scientists transplanted a uterus from a deceased donor into a woman born without one. She carried a living, healthy baby to term, who is also about to celebrate her first birthday later this month.

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These successes, in addition to work into lab-generated egg and sperm cells, suggest that human reproduction is poised for the ultimate disruption.

Read full, original post: Disrupting Reproduction: Two New Advances in Tech-Assisted Baby-Making