

Viewpoint: Biologist Craig Mello knew about the CRISPR babies. Why his silence was 'not acceptable'

The Associated Press reports that Nobel laureate and biologist Craig Mello was aware of a pregnancy in China involving gene-edited babies for months before the news went public. That a prominent scientist knew of this highly unethical work but chose to remain silent is a serious cause for concern, and a sign that the culture around questionable research needs to change.

As Candice Choi and Marilynn Marchione [report](#) for the AP, Mello served on the scientific advisory board of Direct Genomics, a company owned by geneticist He Jiankui, the researcher behind the controversial and [possibly criminal](#) gene-editing work. He, a scientist at the Southern University of Science and Technology in Shenzhen, emailed Mello in April 2018 telling him of the pregnancy. Mello responded by condemning the work, yet he stayed on as a science advisor for He's company.

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Kerry Bowman, a bioethicist at the University of Toronto, said Mello's action shows how problematic a moratorium on embryo gene editing may be given that prominent scientists aren't willing to take action on such a reckless act and clear ethical violation.

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It's obviously important to cast light on individuals who have messed up and should have known better, but more importantly, the science community has to learn from this incident and forge a culture in which it's not acceptable to remain silent.

Read full, original post: [Nobel Prize-Winning Biologist Knew About Gene-Edited Babies for Months but Kept Quiet](#)