

Viewpoint: He Jiankui's CRISPR babies experiment was 'even worse than I first thought'

When He Jiankui announced the birth of twin girls whose [DNA he had modified](#) when they were embryos using the CRISPR gene-editing tool, he justified his actions on the ground that he had given the two girls lifetime immunity from HIV infection. The Chinese scientist claimed that he had altered a gene called CCR5. ...

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He's experiment has been widely, roundly, scorchingly, and appropriately [condemned](#). The risks to the babies born nine months later were vastly higher than the benefits to them or to science... .

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My message here is that CCR5 Δ 32 does not guarantee immunity to HIV infection. It works only for strains of HIV-1 that use both the CD4 and CCR5 cell surface receptors to infect T cells.

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Would a serious advance review of He's experiment have caught this issue? I can only hope so. It certainly should have if the reviewing group included expertise in HIV infection and not just in CRISPR editing. This is a crucial lesson in the importance of a probing prior review before any experiment involving human subjects and *especially* before any first-in-human experiment. ...

Nature is complicated, viruses are tricky, assumptions are dangerous — and He Jiankui's experiment was, amazingly, even worse than I first thought.

Read full, original post: [He Jiankui, embryo editing, CCR5, the London patient, and jumping to conclusions](#)