

Bill Gates: AI, gene editing could help us reach global health goals ‘exponentially’ faster

Microsoft co-founder [Bill Gates](#) has been working to improve the state of global health through his nonprofit foundation for 20 years, and [February 14] he told the nation’s premier scientific gathering that advances in artificial intelligence and gene editing could accelerate those improvements exponentially in the years ahead.

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When it comes to fighting malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases, for example, CRISPR-Cas9 and other gene-editing tools are being used to change the insects’ genome to ensure that they can’t pass along the parasites that cause those diseases. The Gates Foundation is investing tens of millions of dollars in [technologies to spread those genomic changes rapidly through mosquito populations](#).

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One project is using AI to look for links between maternal nutrition and infant birth weight. Other projects focus on measuring the balance of different types of microbes in the human gut, using high-throughput gene sequencing.

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But if the acceleration of medical technologies does manage to happen around the world, Gates insists that could have repercussions on the world’s other great challenges, including the growing inequality between rich and poor.

“Disease is not only a symptom of inequality,” he said, “but it’s a huge cause.”

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