

RNA hacking: How the miraculous tools of the genetics revolution will transform healthcare and the world

[mRNA COVID] vaccines, in essence, transform our bodies into personalized manufacturing plants producing an otherwise foreign object to trigger our natural immune response. This approach will soon create a whole new platform for fighting cancers and other diseases, as well as for providing enhancements even more profound than vaccination.

Hacking our RNA, however, represents only a tiny fraction of what is coming as our new genetics age unfolds. We're only a fifth of the way through the 21st century, but we've already sequenced the full human genome, figured out how to turn adult cells into stem cells, discovered ways to rewrite the genetic code of any living cell and brought down the cost of hacking genes by a factor of millions.

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And because the worst potential abuses—from synthetic pathogens to carelessly genome-edited babies and other irresponsible applications of runaway science—have global implications, we'll also need to develop far better mechanisms for addressing our greatest common challenges.

We need a new generation of treaties, a new UN body dedicated to fostering the most responsible applications of revolutionary science and new global forums for bringing the general public, civil society groups, scientists, ethicists, faith leaders and others together in a common dialogue about how to build a better future for all.

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