

Can you market your genome as a non-fungible token (NFT)?

In the past few months, [a novel cryptocurrency asset called] non-fungible tokens, or NFTs, have become the hot new investment trend, generating skepticism, confusion, and millions of dollars.

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[P]rominent members of the synthetic biology community, among others, have auctioned off their genome as NFTs. Jack Dorsey auctioning Twitter's first tweet for millions of dollars may seem fairly innocuous. But selling the rights to personal health data has important legal, technological, and ethical considerations that underscore that demand a closer look.

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An NFT is simply the ownership of a tokenized representation of something, rather than ownership of the thing itself. For an NFT genome, does auctioning off ownership of a representation of your genome imply the loss of "property rights" over your genome? This of course [assumes](#) you have ownership of your genome in the first place, which some debate.

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"If you sell an NFT of your genome to a drug company, you're licensing it to them to use for research," says Alex Pearlman, bioethicist and science journalist. "That doesn't mean that the pharmaceutical company owns it."

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Pandora's box has been opened with the few NFT genomes on the market. Given the lack of existing frameworks to adequately contextualize this form of innovation, the world is already behind.

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