

WHO proposes global registry and whistle-blowing mechanism to curb unethical and unsafe human gene editing abuses

The World Health Organization issued new recommendations [July 12] on human genome editing, calling for a global registry to track “any form of genetic manipulation” and proposing a whistle-blowing mechanism to raise concerns about unethical or unsafe research.

The U.N. health agency commissioned an [expert](#) group in late 2018 following a dramatic announcement from Chinese scientist He Jiankui that he had created the world’s first gene-edited babies.

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WHO’s expert group also said the U.N. agency should develop ways to identify any potentially concerning gene editing trials, saying a mechanism should be developed “for reporting violations of research integrity.”

Robin Lovell-Badge of the Francis Crick Institute, one of the experts on the committee, cited several instances where scientists in Russia, Ukraine and Turkey planning controversial genetic editing experiments were pressured not to proceed and called for a more formal whistle-blowing mechanism.

Still, the group acknowledged that as gene editing techniques become cheaper and easier to use, the ability of WHO to monitor such research is limited. The U.N. agency also has no authority to compel countries to cooperate, even during a [public health emergency](#).

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