

GLP podcast/video: 'GMO' probiotic may prevent hangovers; Surrogacy turns women into 'children factories'? The case for drug patents

Biotech startup Zbiotics says its genetically engineered bacterium can reduce the risk of hangovers. Is there solid science behind the company's marketing claims? Women can earn thousands of dollars by gestating a child for couples that can't have their own children; some experts warn the practice turns vulnerable women into "children factories." Many governments are working to limit the patent rights drug companies maintain over their products; it's a controversial move that could discourage the development of new pharmaceuticals, some commentators claim.

Podcast:

Video:

Join hosts Dr. Liza Dunn and GLP contributor Cameron English on episode 241 of Science Facts and Fallacies as they break down these latest news stories:

- [Precision probiotics: Can this anti-hangover drink help you metabolize alcohol quicker?](#)

By engineering a bacterium to enhance the metabolism of alcohol, Zbiotics claims it's developed a GM probiotic that can significantly reduce the risk of hangover after a night out at the bar. Taken as a shot before someone consumes alcohol, the product helps the gut break down a chemical called acetaldehyde, which Zbiotics says is largely responsible for the worst effects of binge drinking, based on [cell-culture studies](#). Consumers who have tried the probiotic say it works well, but does the product stand up to scientific scrutiny?

- [Viewpoint: Unregulated \\$14 billion surrogacy industry treats women like 'children factories'](#)

Couples who can't or won't have their own children are increasingly hiring young women to gestate and give birth to their babies. The practice, known as surrogacy, is billed as a practical solution for infertility. But critics maintain that this multi-billion-dollar industry exploits the vulnerable to satisfy the preferences of wealthy celebrities who don't want to endure pregnancy. There is also some evidence that surrogacy carries serious health risks for children and their biological mothers. Are these risks overblown, or is it time to strictly regulate, or even ban, this novel method of reproduction?

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Viewpoint: In the name of equity, Democrats try to limit drug patent rights. Here's why that could derail US bioinnovation and hurt the most vulnerable

Citing access to medicine as a human right, some governments are restricting the intellectual property rights of pharmaceutical companies. The industry and some of its allies claim these regulations discourage innovation by robbing drug companies of the profits they earn and reinvest in future research and development. Rather than giving more patients access to medicine, tighter patent restrictions could actually limit *everyone's* access important therapies as Big Pharma develops ever-fewer drugs. Is there a reasonable middle ground that could expand access to medicine without gutting drug development?

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