

Gene therapy has restored hearing for a second child. Here's why some deaf people adamantly oppose treatment

An 11-year-old deaf boy is now able to hear in one ear after undergoing a gene therapy treatment at [Children's Hospital of Philadelphia](#), one of the first such cases in the world. A second boy, aged 3, [was] scheduled to receive the treatment at CHOP on [February 9].

Yet the news has drawn dismay from some who can best appreciate what's at stake: other deaf people.

For many deaf people, deafness is not something that needs to be fixed. Unlike other medical conditions that have been treated with gene therapy, deafness is not a disease and it doesn't deprive someone of a long, rich life. Similar concerns were raised years ago with the invention of cochlear implants, electronic devices that merely approximate the sense of hearing.

But physicians say gene therapy is likely to yield even better results, providing normal or near-normal hearing ability to thousands of people born with rare types of deafness.

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Speaking to the New York Times by sign-language interpreter, [11-year-old] Aissam said he welcomed the novel sensations.

"There's no sound I don't like," [he said](#).

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