bioethics

# Call for Papers

## Intervening in the human germline: ethical, legal and social perspectives on new techniques in human reproduction

## Bioethics Special Issue
### Online & Print Publication 2019

**Guest Editors: Robert Ranisch, Hans-Jörg Ehni, Urban Wiesing**

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The chances and risks of engineering the human germline have been discussed for decades. This debate has gained new vigor in the light of recent technological developments (e.g. CRISPR/Cas or mitochondrial replacement). In 2015, Chinese scientists were the first to modify (non-viable) human embryos by using the genome-editing technique CRISPR/Cas9. Despite the widely-supported call for a moratorium or ban, research on human embryos is now taking place in the USA and Europe. While there is a consensus that germline therapy is currently not safe enough for clinical use, basic research on the human embryo continues and is preparing the ground for possible applications in the future.

The Guest Editors of this special issue invite submissions that examine the ethical, legal and societal implications of techniques that allow interventions in the human germline (e.g., modification of primordial germ cells, stem cells, zygotes). This issue will focus on new developments in genetic engineering regarding its clinical use as well as basic research, such as improving the success rates of IVF. Topics and research questions addressed by potential papers can include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Looking back: what is new about germline genome editing? Are interventions in the germline a special case? What can we learn from the past (e.g., history of eugenics; Asilomar conference; development of somatic gene therapies, ICSI, or cytoplasmic transfer)?
- Drawing and crossing borders: ethical and conceptual questions related to common distinctions such somatic/germline therapy; therapy/enhancement; basic research/ clinical application.

- Comparing germline editing techniques: Can and should germline interventions replace embryo selection? Which advantages and risk profiles are associated with different methods of germline modification like mitochondrial replacement or genome editing? Does the extent of intervention matter morally (e.g., causing gene knock-outs vs. knock-ins)?
- Research ethics: How safe is safe enough when bringing genome editing into clinical practice? Can basic research on germline editing lead to path dependency? New questions in embryo research: e.g., the moral status of nonviable embryos; revisiting the 14-days-rule.
- Ethical evaluation: What are the limits of consent as a moral principle for germline interventions? Does genome editing provide therapeutic benefits that embryo selection does not? Can there be moral obligations or extended responsibilities to parents in light of future germline therapies? Possible threats to human equality or dignity through germline interventions?
- Governance: Is a moratorium (still) needed/feasible? What mechanisms can regulate research and application effectively? Who should decide: evaluating the role of expert panels and IRBs in governance? How can the participation of society and relevant stakeholders be enhanced?
- Law: national and international legislations on germline genome editing; recommendations for regulatory regimes.
- Media cultures: debunking the hypes and hopes around germline editing; misrepresentation in the public discourse (e.g. “designer babies”); media coverage and public opinion.
- Social consequences: the impact of germline manipulation on social norms? Will genome editing lead to discriminatory or eugenic tendencies? Genome editing and the geneticization of everyday life.

This special issue will bring together multi- and interdisciplinary perspectives. The Guest Editors welcome contributions by scholars from a broad range of disciplines, in particular, philosophy, law, (theoretical and empirical) social sciences, cultural studies, disability studies, media studies, STS.

The editors welcome early discussion of brief proposals and/or abstracts by email to: mailto:robert.ranisch@uni-tuebingen.de

Manuscripts should be submitted to Bioethics online at:
http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/biot.

Please ensure that you select the manuscript type 'Special Issue' and state that your contribution is for the “Genome Editing” Special Issue when prompted.