

Short Film Script

(The film is a newscast segment. I will be standing up with desks and chairs behind me to give it a professional look but also a place that looks conversational).

Me: It's the technology that could literally wipe away disease from the human race. Genetically modifying human embryos has recently been made possible through a process called Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats CRISPR-CAS9. For the first time, researchers from Sun Yat sen University used tested the technology of human embryos. Don't worry, the researchers used non-viable embryos, embryos that couldn't become babies. But when the research was released, the scientific community and the public at large cried out against the "ethical lines" this technology was crossing.

It is true that with the Chinese scientists opening the door to Genetic Human Modification, more and more scientists around the world will get involved in this cutting edge technology. But the uproar against controversial research was largely reactionary, and few people took time to truly consider the implications of the technology. So let's look at what people are saying:

(Visual: A white background with black text that reads "#1: The test results were "off target" and therefore the research should cease. Science, The Guardian)

Me: Magazines such as Science and The Guardian are raising concerns about how (Narrates visual). The results of the research yielded only a few embryos that were successfully modified out of the 54 that were tested. Many are claiming that since the research seemed to "fail" that it should be regarded as unsafe and discarded. These people are making judgments about the research before it has had any time to develop.

Consider the release of Microsoft Vista. Although it was a failure and caused a lot of frustration among the public, Microsoft did not simply give up, but rather sought to improve the technology. Now, this example has nothing to do human health, but it shows how scientific progress works and how it has to work. Scientists can't stop at the first sign of concern.

Head research Huang even said that the technology could not be used until it had 100% accuracy. The progress of technology won't stop, but you can be guaranteed that it will continue to improve until it is, quote on quote, "on target."

(Visual: Same as before, reads, "#2: The scientists are "playing God.")

Me: (Narrates visual). Or as stem cell expert George Daley puts it, "taking control of our genetic destiny." Some are concerned that this new technology is crossing ethical lines since scientists would have too much control over the childbirth process. But science has been "controlling" humans ever since the dawn of modern medicine. We protect children from

diseases by giving them vaccinations when they are young. This new technology simply does this process before the child is even born, preventing the child from ever having to face the risk of certain diseases, truly improving the human condition.

(Visual: Same as before, reads, “#3: This technology will lead to the creation of “designer babies.” Humans Genetic Alert)

Me: Another concern is the idea of “designer babies.” The Humans Genetic Alert group describes the concern as being on a slippery slope since there are no laws dictating this technology. People are concerned that if scientists can modify embryos for health, they would be able to modify children for anything else, including eye color, metabolism, and IQ. These “designer babies” would allow parents to customize their child. But the current technology is far from any of these possibilities. The science works with the replacement of strands of DNA, not increasing brain cells or muscle capacity. In addition, the research has a lot of progress to make before it is close to improving human health. Such laws to dictate this technology are already in the process of being debated and discussed. There is no reason to simply halt all research and progress.

So what does all this mean? Understand that the technology is not out to harm you or your children. And understand that the future of this technology is truly in your hands. As people continue to express their concerns and frustrations in magazines and even in social media, the research and the rules that guide it will progress. But stopping this ground-breaking technology would only prevent scientists from doing what they are meant to do: improve the human experience for all of us.