

COMMITTEE ON
**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND
TECHNOLOGY**
CHAIRMAN LAMAR SMITH



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Media Contact: Zachary Kurz
(202) 225-6371

Statement of Research & Technology Subcommittee Chairwoman Barbara Comstock (R-Va.)
The Science and Ethics of Genetically Engineered Human DNA

Chairwoman Comstock: Biotechnology - the engineering of genetic material in living beings and plants - has transformed modern medicine and agriculture.

Rapid advances in biotech research have brought great opportunities for new medical treatments and products, and simultaneously have also raised questions about possible ethical implications and safety issues.

Today, we are here to discuss the science and ethics of the most recent and eye-opening development in biotechnology: human genome-editing.

This research has been a major topic of news and editorials in recent months. New tools that allow a gene to be deleted, inserted, or replaced by a different piece of DNA are becoming more cost-effective and simpler to execute.

In April, it was reported that for the first time a team of Chinese scientists had attempted to edit the genome of human embryos. The report raised concerns for many scientists and policy makers about the safety and ethics of using these new technologies on human DNA.

Many prominent scientists have called for a better framework to be developed for responsible use of the technology.

I look forward to learning more from our witnesses today who will provide an overview of the science behind these new technologies, help us examine the ethical implications and risks, and explore what the next steps should be for building a responsible framework for utilizing the technology. They will also help us answer how the United States can provide scientific and ethical leadership in this arena.

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