

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



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Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)
The Science and Ethics of Genetically Engineered Human DNA

Chairman Smith: Thank you Madam Chair. I look forward to today's discussion on a new development in biology, which has been called "a game changer," "revolutionary," "powerful," and "a major issue for all humanity."

The new discoveries in genetically engineering human DNA offer potential cures for devastating genetic disorders. But the speed at which these new, simpler and cheaper technologies are being used in the lab also presents ethical and health concerns.

Most of the scientific community members have been clear: the science and ethics of this new technology must be resolved in order to prevent dangerous abuses and unintended consequences.

A recent report from China, where teams of researchers have begun to experiment with engineering DNA in human embryos, is alarming. This is an area where the United States can and should provide scientific and moral leadership.

We need to better understand the technology and procedures being used so that we can ensure patients are treated in the safest and most ethical manner possible.

An April editorial in Science Magazine called for a prudent path forward for genomic engineering. It recommended a moratorium on further research, while creating public forums for scientists, ethicists and policy makers to discuss "the attendant ethical, social, and legal implications of genome modification."

This is why it is important that the House Science Committee is holding the first congressional hearing on this profound and complex subject.

The purpose of the Science Committee is to explore the significance of scientific discoveries as well as their potential implications for humankind.

But we also must always be conscious of the potential ethical and moral issues raised by previously unimagined scientific breakthroughs.

We must take the lead in reviewing new and innovative areas of science, such as genetically engineered DNA.

I look forward to an informative discussion with our distinguished panel of witnesses.

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