Preventing designer babies

Click here to know on CRISPR

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What is the issue?

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With the evolutionary technique entailing the editing of genes by bacterial DNA scissors called CRISPR, the debate on designer babies is set in motion.

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What are the concerns to be addressed?

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- **Beauty -** There is a possibility of using it to alter genes to make babies look more attractive, smarter, stronger, etc.
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- Confusion of “cure” with “cosmetics” need to be addressed.
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- The technique should be used solely for life-saving medical interventions, while the cosmetic baby design should be prevented.
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- **Safety -** Most drug regulatory regimes insist that drug makers submit clinical trial data to establish that their drugs are safe and effective.
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- The issue in this case is about the longevity of these trials as genetic changes and alterations take years to manifest.
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- An incremental case-by-case approach could be adopted.
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- **IP -** Governments must get it right while dealing with the corporate conglomerates, and their “trade secret” and other intellectual property (IP) issues.
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- We need to therefore encourage more **transparency and openness** and open up this gene trial data to the wider public, and to scientists and doctors.
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- Given all these concerns it is essential to establish firmly, certain **baseline principles** to go ahead with gene editing in all its fairness.
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Source: The Hindu

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