



CENTER FOR
GENETICS
AND SOCIETY

BioPolitical

News&Views

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SPOTLIGHT



COVID-19 Advisory On International Surrogacy Arrangements

Surrogacy360 has released a COVID-19 advisory on international surrogacy. In addition to the usual risks of cross-border surrogacy arrangements, the pandemic raises additional concerns and heightened risks for all parties involved. The advisory urges avoiding international surrogacy arrangements at this time.

[Read Surrogacy360's COVID-19 Advisory.](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS



World Health
Organization

WHO Seeking Public Comment on Draft Governance Framework for Human Genome Editing

The WHO Expert Advisory Committee on Developing Global Standards for Governance and Oversight of Human Genome Editing has released a draft of their proposed governance framework and is seeking comments from the public through August 19, 2020. CGS encourages you to review the [draft governance framework](#) and submit comments to the [online questionnaire](#). Your perspective and contribution are urgently needed in the development of this significant global policy document.



CGS Welcomes Quinn Brashares

CGS is pleased to introduce our new intern, Quinn Brashares. Quinn is interested in working towards social equity in the realms of genetic engineering, the justice system, and artificial intelligence. He recently graduated from the University of Miami with a BA in political and environmental science and plans to pursue a law degree in the coming years. Quinn says that CGS represents to him a paramount cause, a place to absorb and deepen knowledge, and a wonderful community of similar minds. Welcome, Quinn!

COMMENTARY



COVID, Data, DNA, and the Future

Pete Shanks, *Biopolitical Times* | 07.20.2020

Enormous and potentially dangerous real-world consequences flow freely from Big Data toward a wide swath of individuals and communities.



Book Review: "Let There Be Life: An Intimate Portrait of Robert Edwards and His IVF Revolution"

Gina Maranto, *Biopolitical Times* | 07.20.2020

This self-published "intimate portrait" of Robert Edwards — British embryologist, IVF pioneer, Nobel prize-winner, and eugenicist — is an unfortunate hagiography.

CGS IN THE NEWS

California Proposition 14: Stem Cell Research Bond

Ben Trefny, *KALW* | 07.20.2020

Who's against Prop 14? For one, there's the non-profit Center for Genetics and Society in Berkeley. Also, while 22 CIRM board members voted to endorse the proposition, one voted against it. Patient advocate Jeff Sheehy wrote: "After spending all of this money, CIRM has yet to produce a single FDA approved product and the state has not achieved any healthcare cost savings from therapies developed by CIRM."

Watching the Whitewash

John Jackson, *Fardels Bear* | 07.13.2020

Stephen Hsu was pressured to resign as VP for Research at Michigan State University because of his support for scientific racism and eugenics. Since then he has attacked the "Twitter Mob," which apparently includes the 550 faculty, staff, and students who signed a letter outlining their concerns about Hsu, and the Center for Genetics and Society, which wrote in support of the letter.

WHAT WE'RE READING

HERITABLE HUMAN GENOME EDITING | GENE THERAPY | EUGENICS | DISABILITY RIGHTS | ASSISTED REPRODUCTION | GENOMIC DATA | BIG DATA | EULOGY

HERITABLE HUMAN GENOME EDITING

Once Science Fiction, Gene Editing Is Now a Looming Reality

[Katie Hafner](#), *The New York Times* | 07.22.2020

The prospect of erasing some disabilities and perceived deficiencies hovers at the margins of what people consider ethically acceptable.

Lab-grown sperm could let infertile men have gene-edited children

[Michael Le Page](#), *New Scientist* | 07.12.2020

"I'm not going to take a stand," Wilkinson [the head of the scientific team] added later, referring to whether future humans should be gene-edited. "I think it's worth a debate."

GENE THERAPY

A Boy With Muscular Dystrophy Was Headed For A Wheelchair. Then Gene Therapy Arrived

[Jon Hamilton](#), *NPR* | 07.27.2020

Clinical trials are very promising though there are still side-effects.

Scientists make precise gene edits to mitochondrial DNA for first time

[Heidi Ledford](#), *Nature* | 07.08.2020

The technique could allow researchers to study, and perhaps even treat, diseases caused by mutations in the mitochondrial genome.

This Company Wants to Rewrite the Future of Genetic Disease—Without Crispr Gene Editing

[Megan Molteni](#), *Wired* | 07.07.2020

Tessera Therapeutics is developing a new class of gene editors capable of precisely plugging in long stretches of DNA—something that Crispr can't do.

EUGENICS

The Singularity Prophets

[Benjamin Charles Garmain Lee](#), *Current Affairs* | 07.23.2020

Transhumanism has long been popular among the techno-libertarians of Silicon Valley, and the line between it and eugenics is not always completely clear. "Human enhancement" is the transhumanist euphemism for non-coercive eugenics.

Liberal, progressive — and racist? The Sierra Club faces its white-supremacist history.

[Darryl Fears and Steven Mufson](#), *The Washington Post* | 07.22.2020

The environmental group is speaking out against John Muir, who both fought to preserve nature and disparaged African Americans and Native Americans.

'Act of genocide.' Eugenics program tried to 'breed out' Black people in NC, report says

[Hayley Fowler](#), *The News & Observer* | 07.22.2020

Scholarly analysis of North Carolina's eugenic sterilization program demonstrates how racially biased and genocidal it was.

'Brave New World' Arrives in the Future It Predicted

[Alexis Soloski](#), *The New York Times* | 07.13.2020

Aldous Huxley's alarmingly prescient 1932 novel of free love and social control is now a nine-episode series streaming on NBC's Peacock service.

DISABILITY RIGHTS

Planned Parenthood in N.Y. Disavows Margaret Sanger Over Eugenics

[Nikita Stewart](#), *The New York Times* | 07.21.2020

The feminist icon and reproductive-rights pioneer also lent support to a dangerous belief in improving the human race through selective breeding.

People with disabilities protest police violence, COVID-19 discrimination

[Chelsea Cox](#), *USA Today* | 07.14.2020

Families around the country are protesting discrimination by health workers and others, including both police and election officials.

ASSISTED REPRODUCTION

Chinese infants born to Chicago-area surrogates are stranded in the U.S. without their parents, due to COVID-19: 'I am missing this kid every minute.'

[Nora Schoenberg](#), *Chicago Tribune* | 07.22.2020

200 to 400 babies born to American surrogates are stranded in the US, with their biological parents in countries including China, France, Britain, and Israel. Paid international surrogacy is explicitly allowed only in a handful of places worldwide, including Russia, Ukraine and some US states.

The Stranded Babies of the Coronavirus Disaster

[Lizzie Widdicombe](#), *The New Yorker* | 07.20.2020

A Brooklyn couple's daughter was due to be born in April, to a surrogate in Ukraine. Then the virus struck.

Stateless children and parents who are legal 'strangers': the Irish families left in limbo

[Peter McGuire](#), *TheJournal.ie* | 07.14.2020

There is no legislation in Ireland covering reciprocal IVF – where one female partner provides the eggs and the other carries the baby – for same-sex couples, and the law has other significant omissions.

GENOMIC DATA

Large DNA Study Traces Violent History of American Slavery

[Christine Kenneally](#), *The New York Times* | 07.23.2020

Scientists from the consumer genetics company 23andMe have published the largest DNA study to date of people with African ancestry in the Americas.

A Security Breach Exposed More Than One Million DNA Profiles On A Major Genealogy Database

[Peter Aldhous](#), *BuzzFeed News* | 07.22.2020

GEDmatch was hacked and profiles exposed for several hours; also, MyHeritage was the object of a phishing attack.

NIH delves into COVID-19 racial disparities with 'All of Us'

[Ashley Gold](#), *Los Angeles Times* | 07.21.2020

The participants' blood and DNA samples, along with their health records, offer researchers a trove of data about the pandemic's effect on minorities.

Supreme Court of Canada upholds genetic non-discrimination law

[Olivia Stefanovich](#), *CBC News* | 07.10.2020

The legislation passed in 2017 but was extremely controversial on procedural grounds.

BIG DATA

Google Promises Privacy With Virus App but Can Still Collect Location Data

[Natasha Singer](#), *The New York Times* | 07.20.2020

Some government agencies had unsuccessfully pushed Google to make a change.

Everything you need to know about Palantir, the secretive company coming for all your data

[Sara Morrisson](#), *Vox* | 07.16.2020

Peter Thiel's data-mining company is increasingly working with governments, notably in the US and Britain.

EULOGY

Rosalind Franklin was so much more than the 'wronged heroine' of DNA

[Nature Editorial](#) | 07.22.2020

One hundred years after her birth, it's time to reassess the legacy of a pioneering chemist and X-ray crystallographer.

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