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# BioPolitical

## News&Views

May 14, 2021

### SPOTLIGHT



#### This Weekend! *Perfect*

Don't miss this compelling look at "the brave new world of genetic engineering" with two live virtual shows, May 15-16. CGS' Marcy Darnovsky, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, and Lea Witkowsky will discuss the play following Saturday's performance.

[Get tickets for live or on demand viewing.](#)

### ANNOUNCEMENTS



#### Recent CGS Presentations

Videos are now available for two recent presentations by CGS executive director Marcy Darnovsky. These include the panel "**Democratic Imaginations at the Frontiers of Science and Technology**," organized by the Global Observatory for Genome Editing, and "**Use Gene Editing to Treat Patients, Not Design Babies**," organized by the Jewish Secular Community of Cleveland.

### COMMENTARY

## Ethics of Surrogacy During COVID-19 Pandemic

[Cathy Sakimura and Emily Galpern](#), *Men Having Babies* | 05.12.2021



The COVID pandemic has placed new hurdles in the path to having a child through surrogacy, especially when crossing borders is involved, by restricting travel, delaying birth certificates and visas, and introducing specific safety considerations. It is imperative for intended parents contemplating surrogacy to consider how to do so ethically during the pandemic, given heightened health risks and the impacts of COVID precautions.

## CGS IN THE NEWS



### Should scientists be allowed to grow human embryos in a dish beyond 14 days? Is it scientifically important or morally wrong?

[Karen Weintraub](#), *USA Today* | 05.02.2021

Some scientists say extending human embryo research to 28 days could lead to important breakthroughs. But CGS' Marcy Darnovsky said efforts to overturn the 14-day rule are another example of scientific overreach. "There's a real problem with scientists who are jumping ahead of the public."

## WHAT WE'RE READING

GENE EDITING | GENE THERAPY | ASSISTED REPRODUCTION |  
EUGENICS | VARIOUS

### GENE EDITING

#### CRISPR Madness: Welcome to the Age of Genetic Chaos

[Stuart A. Newman](#), *Counterpunch* | 05.05.2021

Recent, widely reviewed books accept the baseless premise that gene modification of human embryos can be done safely. But developmental biology has shown that embryos cannot be reliably engineered. Even so-called single-gene traits are established with the participation of dozens or hundreds of other genes often acting in compensatory fashions.

#### Scientists Have Created A New Gene-Editing Tool That Could Outperform CRISPR

[Derya Ozdemir](#), *Interesting Engineering* | 05.03.2021

The "Retron Library Recombineering" (RLR) technique produces up to millions of mutations concurrently in bacterial cells and "barcodes" mutant cells, enabling the whole pool to be screened at once. RLR is a simpler, more flexible gene-editing tool than CRISPR-Cas9, and can be used for highly multiplexed experiments.

## GENE THERAPY

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### **Gene Therapy Is Giving Us Incredible New Tools to Fight Disease. How Far Can It Go?**

**Wynne Parry**, *Philadelphia* | 05.08.2021

The rapid development of Covid-19 vaccines using mRNA or DNA highlights recent advances in the use of genetic material as medicine. CAR-T therapies for cancer treatment and new gene therapies for hemophilia and heart disease are in the works, and gene editing with CRISPR is close to clinical trials.

### **Crispr's Next Frontier: Treating Common Conditions**

**Amy Dockser Marcus**, *The Wall Street Journal* | 05.07.2021

In the next decade, Crispr-Cas9 and other new gene-editing techniques may protect the health of millions of people with a range of conditions, including familial hypercholesterolemia, chronic pain and diabetes. Rather than take drugs for years or even decades, at-risk people might be able to protect themselves with a one-and-done Crispr therapy.

### **Failure of genetic therapies for Huntington's devastates community**

**Diana Kwon**, *Nature* | 05.05.2021

Hopes were high for drugs designed to lower levels of a mutant protein, but development has stalled, dealing a crushing blow to those affected by the disease. Two pharmaceutical companies have halted clinical trials of gene-targeting therapies for Huntington's disease (HD), following the drugs' disappointing performance.

### **Six patients with dementia went to Mexico for an unproven gene therapy, a biotech CEO claims**

**Megan Molteni**, *STAT* | 05.03.2021

The biotech startup wants to accelerate testing of unproven anti-aging medicines and views U.S. drug safety regulations as a hindrance. The effort raises the specter of an overseas medical tourism industry targeting patients desperate to lengthen their lives and offering unproven treatments that would permanently alter the genetic code inside recipients' cells.

## ASSISTED REPRODUCTION

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### **'Dreams, Hopes, and Bank Accounts Wiped Clean' In Surrogacy Scam**

**Ellen Trachman**, *Above the Law* | 05.05.2021

Greg Blosser, convicted after conning 44 clients who had hoped to become parents through surrogacy, was sentenced to 32 months in federal prison and \$1,194,519.54 restitution.

### **Most Australian women using IVF pay for add-on treatments with 'weak' evidence behind them, research finds**

**Joseph Dunstan**, *ABC News (Australia)* | 05.03.2021

Researchers found that 82 percent of 1,590 women surveyed had used an additional treatment while undergoing IVF. The most common add-on treatments were acupuncture, pre-implantation genetic testing of embryos, and Chinese herbal medicine. Costs for these extras were between AU\$300 and \$3000, but the evidence base for the treatments was "rather weak."

## EUGENICS

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## Eugenics beliefs led to 60 years of forced sterilizations in Oregon; Social Protection board finally disbanded in 1983

[Douglas Perry](#), *The Oregonian* | 05.10.2021

Bethenia Owens-Adair was one of Oregon's first practicing women doctors and a heroine of the state's women's-rights movement. She also led the charge resulting in Oregon's 1917 eugenic sterilization law, which was responsible for forced sterilizations of more than 2600 women and men.

## Nazi Trump? Listen to Trump Himself Answer the Question

[Lester Golden](#), *Medium* | 05.10.2021

When people repeatedly announce who they are in their own words, listen. The core of Nazi ideology is racial darwinism, the belief that humanity is divided into a hierarchy of inferior and superior races. Trump has repeatedly advertised that he subscribes to this core belief of Nazism; here is a collection of his statements.

## For Rosa Reveals The Ugly History Of Forced Sterilizations

[Cristina Escobar](#), *Refinery29* | 04.30.2021

The film takes us back to what happened in Los Angeles when doctors performed tubal ligations on Latinas, specifically targeting mothers who were undergoing emergency C-sections.

## VARIOUS

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## US doctors group issues anti-racism plan for itself, field

[Lindsey Tanner](#), *AP* | 05.11.2021

The American Medical Association's plan has been in the works for more than a year. The group's leaders said health inequities highlighted by the pandemic, ongoing police brutality, and recent race-based crimes have given the effort a sense of urgency. Some critics, however, remain skeptical that reforms will be implemented quickly enough.

## Cloning Wildlife and Editing Their Genes to Protect Them and Us

[Hannah Thomasy](#), *NEO.LIFE* | 05.06.2021

Tweaking the genes of wild animals could save endangered species and protect humans from disease. What could possibly go wrong? As scientists and bioethicists have pointed out, many seemingly beneficial genetic changes could have catastrophic consequences.

## Inequality's deadly toll

[Amy Maxmen](#), *Nature* | 04.28.2021

Scholarship on the social determinants of health has been growing for decades, but real moves to fix the underlying problems are complex, politically fraught, and rare. Can COVID push science to finally address the issue? The tumultuous coronavirus response in California's San Joaquin Valley provides some clues.

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