



# Chinese Scientist Claims First Gene Edited Babies

Discussion > Advanced 9



# Exercise 1 – Vocabulary

<b>condemn</b>	To criticize something strongly.
[verb]	<i>Ex: He <b>condemned</b> his opponent's view on environmental issues.</i>

<b>unethical</b>	Morally wrong and unacceptable.
[adjective]	<i>Ex: Many people believe that conducting experiments on animals is <b>unethical</b>.</i>

<b>perilous</b>	Extremely dangerous.
[adjective]	<i>Ex: They set off on a <b>perilous</b> journey to the top of Mount Everest.</i>



<b>embryo</b>	A very young living thing in the early stages of development before birth.
[noun]	<i>Ex: Research on human <b>embryos</b> is banned in this country.</i>

<b>violate</b>	To break or refuse to obey a law, rule, etc.
[verb]	<i>Ex: He was arrested for <b>violating</b> the law.</i>

<b>justifiable</b>	Acceptable because there is a good reason for it.
[adjective]	<i>Ex: The government claims that their actions were <b>justifiable</b> under the given circumstances.</i>



## Exercise 2 – Reading

*Read the text aloud with your tutor and discuss the key points.*

### Chinese Scientist Claims First Gene Edited Babies

A Chinese scientist claims he successfully created the world's first genetically-edited babies. He Jiankui of Southern University of Science and Technology of China said he had edited the DNA of twin girls born a few weeks ago.

Jiankui said he had performed the experiment to help protect the babies from future infection of HIV, the virus responsible for AIDS. He said the process had "worked safely" and the twin girls were "as healthy as any other babies."

Jiankui made the claim in interviews with the Associated Press, and also spoke about his research with organizers of an international conference on gene editing in Hong Kong. There was no independent confirmation of He's work and his claims were immediately condemned by some scientists as unsafe and unethical.



Notre Dame Law School professor O. Carter Snead described the experiment as unethical, adding that it "represents a perilous new moment in human history."

The recently discovered gene-editing tool He used, CRISPR-cas9, makes it possible to change DNA to supply a needed gene or take one away that is causing problems.

So far, the tool has only been used on adults to treat deadly diseases, and the changes only affected that person. Editing embryos is different because such changes can be passed down. In the US, the process is only permitted for lab research. China has not specifically banned gene editing.

The university where He is based said his work had "seriously violated academic ethics and standards." University officials said they had no knowledge of his research and had launched an investigation. China's National Health Commission has also ordered an investigation into He's activities.

One well-known scientist, Harvard University's George Church, defended the attempt to edit genes to prevent infections of HIV. Church told the AP that since HIV is "a major and growing public health threat" he finds such experiments "justifiable."



## Exercise 3 – Discussion

*Discuss the following questions with your tutor.*

1. What are your thoughts on He Jiankui's claims?
2. Do you think that gene editing will become a common medical procedure within your lifetime?
3. If you were a scientist, would you be interested in working in the field of gene editing?
4. What would you say is the greatest public health threat in your country? Please explain your answer.
5. If you were to study medicine, what would you choose to focus on? Why?
6. What changes do you expect to see in healthcare over your lifetime? Please explain your answer.
7. What illnesses or diseases do you think medical researchers should be focusing on finding a cure for?
8. Who do you think should be responsible for funding medical research? Why?