

Reflections on the ethics of genetic enhancement

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The technologies made available by new research in genetics and genomics have been and will be used not only to diagnose and treat disease, but also to attempt to enhance human traits and capacities. A broad definition of genetic-enhancement technologies, not merely gene manipulation, but also indirect genetic technologies, such as biosynthetic drugs, is needed to capture the full range of possible applications. It is difficult, but often possible, to anticipate the enhancement temptations of new therapies. Such anticipation may help us in shaping the marketing, availability, or other aspects of those technologies. Appropriate public and professional policies are needed, and work on them should begin immediately. Most important, we must stimulate public education and dialogue to encourage personal ethical reflection on the appropriate uses and limits of genetic-enhancement technologies.

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