

**Statement by the Executive Board of the Science Council of Japan on  
“Genome-Edited Babies”**

December 7, 2018

The principal investigator responsible for the startling news of the first genome-edited babies has reported his research at the 2nd International Summit on Human Genome Editing (November 27-29, 2018, Hong Kong). If this report is confirmed, the Science Council of Japan (SCJ) condemns this conduct, which is unacceptable in terms of bioethics in particular and research ethics as a whole, in the strongest possible terms.

Genome editing is still an immature technology. Its application to human embryos and germ cells is medically highly risky as it could give rise to unexpected side effects in any child born after such interventions. The resulting transmission and spread of edited loci across generations would have an irreversible negative impact on the human race. Furthermore, genome editing of human embryos may eventually lead to the eugenic production of human babies with particular traits. For all these reasons, the application of current genome editing technology to human embryos and germ cells is both scientifically and ethically unacceptable.

The SCJ Committee on Genome Editing Technology in Medical Sciences and Clinical Applications discussed the problems surrounding the clinical application of genome editing technology in its 23rd term (2014–2017), and issued a recommendation “Genome Editing Technology in Japanese Medical Sciences and Clinical Applications in Japan” in September 2017. This recommendation included a strong call for legal regulation of genome editing, including a temporary prohibition on its clinical application to reproductive medicine. Indeed, a part of this recommendation is reflected in a proposed guideline which is now being implemented by the government of Japan.

To ensure the appropriate use of genome editing technology in the rapidly advancing life sciences, the SCJ is committed to continuing its leadership role in fostering dialogs with the domestic and international scientific community and the general public, and will take every necessary step so that such irresponsible and egregious misconduct does not occur again.

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Reference

SCJ Recommendation: Genome Editing Technology in Medical Sciences and Clinical Applications in Japan

<http://www.scj.go.jp/ja/info/kohyo/pdf/kohyo-23-t251-1-en.pdf>