



BioPolitical

News&Views

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SPOTLIGHT



A Cloned Ferret!

Pete Shanks, *Biopolitical Times* | 02.24.2021
Grand claims for animal cloning go back to the birth of the first cloned sheep in 1996. Advocates of “de-extinction” promote it as a way to save endangered species, though many believe that such efforts are, at best, counterproductive.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Welcome Anna Fang, new CGS Intern!

Anna Fang is interested in improving health equity through outreach and epidemiology research. She is currently studying Molecular and Cell Biology and Data Science at the University of California, Berkeley. Through her involvement in CGS and other community work, she hopes to help work towards a better educated and healthier public. Anna is joining CGS for the spring semester through the Health Service Internship program at UC Berkeley.

COMMENTARY



There Be Gold in Them Thar Genes

Pete Shanks, *Biopolitical Times* | 02.24.2021
23andMe is cashing in on its customers' spit, to the tune of \$3.5 billion. This is the culmination of a trend spotted many years ago: The business model is not, and never has been, about cash flow from individual customers. No, the big money is in leasing out genetic data to pharmaceutical companies and other researchers.



Exchange of letters re "Human Germline and Heritable Genome Editing: The Global Policy Landscape"

[Marcy Darnovsky, Katie Hasson, and Timothy M. Krahn](#), *The CRISPR Journal* | 02.19.2021

We decided to undertake this rigorous policy review because we suspected that the debate about heritable genome editing was moving ahead without comprehensive and accurate information about the existing policy situation. Our research confirmed this impression: that is, while numerous public and policy conversations state or assume that few existing rules address the permissibility of heritable genome editing, in fact we found that 70 countries categorically prohibit it.

WHAT WE'RE READING

GENOME EDITING | GENE THERAPY | GENOMICS |
COVID & DISCRIMINATION | ASSISTED REPRODUCTION | ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE | VARIOUS

GENOME EDITING

The Dark Side of CRISPR

[Sandy Sufian and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson](#), *Scientific American* | 02.16.2021

Many in our society continue to believe that ridding society of genetic differences that count as disease or defect is an undeniable "good." But our genetic conditions are not simply entities that can be clipped away from us as if they were some kind of a misspelled word or an awkward sentence in a document.

GENE THERAPY

Novartis and the Gates Foundation aim to create a more practical gene therapy for sickle cell patients around the world

[Elizabeth Cooney](#), *STAT* | 02.17.2021

The goal is to create an off-the-shelf treatment that bypasses many of the steps of current approaches, in which cells are removed and processed outside the body before being returned to patients. The hope is that it would be affordable and simple enough to treat patients anywhere in the world, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

Gene therapy trials for sickle cell disease halted after two patients develop cancer

[Jocelyn Kaiser](#), *Science* | 02.16.2021

It's possible the cancers stemmed from chemotherapy the patients received to prepare their bodies for the gene's delivery, but the gene therapy itself could play a more direct role. The company is looking to see whether a virus used to deliver the treatment caused the cancers, reviving old concerns about the risks of this approach.

GENOMICS

Tiny Blobs of Brain Cells Could Reveal How Your Mind Differs From a Neanderthal's

[Carl Zimmer](#), *New York Times* | 02.11.2021

Researchers who grew clusters of brain cells in the lab with a gene carried by our ancient ancestors described how this triggered striking changes in the anatomy and function of brain organoids. Other experts were surprised; they had expected subtle shifts that might be difficult to observe.

The next 20 years of human genomics must be more equitable and more open

[Editorial](#), *Nature* | 02.10.2021

This special issue of *Nature* examines how far the human genome sequence has taken us, and how far we have to go. Many of the ethical, legal and social implications of genome research — including questions of privacy, informed consent and equitable representation of researchers and participants — remain unresolved.

COVID & DISCRIMINATION

New ZIP code data reflects disparities in N.Y.C.'s vaccination effort, officials say.

[Mihir Zaveri](#), *New York Times* | 02.16.2021

The share of residents who are fully vaccinated in some wealthier Upper West and East Side ZIP codes, which have high proportions of white residents, reaches up to eight times the rate in parts of predominantly Black neighborhoods like East New York.

Fury at 'do not resuscitate' notices given to Covid patients with learning disabilities

[James Tapper](#), *The Guardian* | 02.13.2021

There is growing evidence that even those with a mild disability are more likely to die if they contract the coronavirus. People with learning disabilities aged 18 to 34 are 30 times more likely to die of Covid than others the same age. Vulnerable people have encountered “shocking discrimination” during the pandemic.

#HighRiskCA Movement Calls Out Ableism in Vaccine Distribution: “High-Risk is High-Risk”

[Oliver C. Haug](#), *Ms* | 02.10.2021

Bay Area-based disability rights advocate Alice Wong started the hashtag #HighRiskCA to highlight the ways in which California's age-tiered vaccine distribution system will negatively impact and kill disabled people and others who may be younger but at higher risk.

ASSISTED REPRODUCTION

Student debt is driving more Americans to donate their eggs — and some suffer lasting complications

[Diane Tober](#), *Salon* | 02.15.2021

Only in America is it common to sell one's eggs to fund one's education. While making major medical decisions under the weight of crippling debt, at least 30 percent of egg donors reported feeling under-informed about potential short- and long-term risks.

Police bust alleged illegal surrogacy ring, Thai women allegedly gave birth for overseas buyers

[Caitlin Ashworth](#), *The Thaiger* | 02.07.2021

An alleged illegal transnational surrogacy ring, posed as a cleaning company, was busted after surrogate mothers were unable to transfer the children to intended parents from other countries due to travel restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic, investigators say. Thai women would travel to Cambodia for an embryo transfer and then return to Thailand until they gave birth.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Who Should Stop Unethical A.I.?

[Matthew Hutson](#), *The New Yorker* | 02.15.2021

Many kinds of researchers encounter checkpoints at which they are asked about the ethics of their

research. This doesn't happen as much in AI research, which is mostly self-regulated. At AI conferences, researchers are increasingly alarmed by what they see.

VARIOUS

A Biotechnology Crossroads

Becca Muir, *Science for the People* | Winter 2020

Review of *Biotech Juggernaut: Hope, Hype, and the Hidden Agendas of Entrepreneurial BioScience*, by Tina Stevens and Stuart Newman. How did bioscience move away from “knowledge for knowledge’s sake,” and towards a market-based, profit-driven model? *Biotech Juggernaut* aims to answer this question and explore how historical, social, economic, and political forces have shaped biotechnology today.

GMWatch mythbuster exposes UK government misinformation on gene editing

GMWatch | 02.16.2021

The UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs published an “Explainer” on gene editing as a guide for members of the public who want to respond to the government’s consultation on its plan to deregulate gene editing. This evidence-free leaflet is a wish list for GMO boosters and misleads the public.

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