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CHINA DRAWS UP TIGHTER RULES ON HUMAN GENE AND EMBRYO TRIALS

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Last year, a Chinese scientist's announcement that he had made "gene-edited" babies sparked ethical concerns.

China's top legislature will consider tougher rules on research involving human genes and embryos, the first such move since a Chinese scientist sparked controversy last year by announcing he had made the world's first "gene-edited" babies.

He Jiankui, associate professor at Southern University of Science and Technology in Shenzhen, attracted condemnation from the global scientific community when he said he had used a technology known as CRISPR-Cas9 to alter the embryonic genes of twin girls born in November.

Chinese authorities launched an investigation into Mr. He's work and said they had halted the kind of research he was undertaking.

Under the draft laws sent to China's legislature for review on Saturday, medical and human trials would face closer scrutiny and stricter requirements, such as ensuring human subjects are properly briefed, State media outlet Xinhua reported.

The rules would also require all future trials to be approved by administrative authorities as well as ethical committees, it said.

The report did not specify a timeline for the approval of the regulations, or make specific mention of Mr. He's research.

In videos posted online and at the November 2018 conference, where Mr. He made his controversial presentation, the Chinese scientist said that he believed his gene editing would help protect the girls from infection with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

Chinese authorities and institutions, as well as hundreds of international scientists, condemned him and said any application of gene editing on human embryos for reproductive purposes was against the law and medical ethics of China.

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