

In Search of Limits in the Age of Genome Editing: A 5-Year Retrospective

Global Observatory for Genome Editing
Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
May 13, 2022

Event description:

In the past five years, we have seen the emergence of a global patchwork of laws, policies, recommendations, proposals, conventions, and declarations that define and delimit the field of permissible genome editing research. This workshop aims to explore the concepts of limits that are reflected in these developments: limits to technological applications, to research, and to knowledge; limits on the scope of deliberation and extent of participation, on the range of moral questions that should be asked, and on the forms of reasoning, evidence, and expertise required to make informed and democratic decisions.

We will build on the [2017 “Editorial Aspirations” conference](#) at Harvard that provided a forum for discussing the future of human genome editing, a discussion that ultimately led to the formation of the Global Observatory. The succeeding five years have brought a proliferation of policy approaches intended to set bounds on gene editing research and applications, even as science and technology continue to forge ahead. Numerous international expert advisory bodies have taken a leading role in delimiting responsible from irresponsible research, with different framings and outcomes.

Given the complexity of the ethical landscape and the variety of mechanisms at work in setting limits, we aim to think systematically about how limits to human genome editing are being defined and to identify salient issues and positions that may be receiving less attention than deserved. In short, the workshop hopes to characterize how today’s discussion of limits may itself be limiting. This workshop therefore seeks to further the Global Observatory’s mission of broadening the present scope of deliberation, centering not just on the limits themselves, but also on the processes that institutionalize them, the voices that contribute to them, the human values that animate them, and the forces that may push back against them.

Event Schedule:

Friday, May 13

9:00-9:30 am – Welcome and Introductions

Sheila Jasanoff, Harvard Kennedy School
George Daley, Harvard Medical School (virtual)

9:30-11:00 am – Genome editing: Where Do We Come From? Where Are We Going?

Moderator: Sheila Jasanoff, Harvard Kennedy School

Panelists:

Peter Mills, Nuffield Council on Bioethics

Françoise Baylis, Dalhousie University

Katherine Littler, World Health Organization

Laurence Lwoff, Council of Europe (virtual)

11:00-11:30 am – Break

11:30 am-1:00 pm – Locating the Human: The Needs and Purposes of Genome Editing

Moderator: Krishanu Saha, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Panelists:

Teresa Burke, Gallaudet University

Rachel Salzman, Alcyone Therapeutics

John Evans, University of California, San Diego

Lunch (1:00 pm-2:00 pm)

2:00-3:30 pm – Embryonic Limits

Moderator: J. Benjamin Hurlbut, Arizona State University

Panelists:

Sheila Jasanoff, Harvard Kennedy School

Jianping Fu, University of Michigan

Ubaka Ogbogu, University of Alberta

Krishanu Saha, University of Wisconsin-Madison

3:30-4:00 pm – Break

4:00-5:30 pm – Interrogating Limits

Moderator: John Evans, University of California, San Diego

Panelists:

Katie Hasson, Center for Genetics and Society

Erik Sontheimer, University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School

Elizabeth Bartholet, Harvard Law School