

WHO paves way for governance on human genome editing

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The World Health Organization's new advisory committee on developing global standards for governance and oversight of human genome editing has agreed to work towards a strong international governance framework in this area.

Over the past two days, the committee of experts reviewed the current state of science and technology. They also agreed core principles of transparency, inclusivity and responsibility that underpin the Committee's current recommendations. The committee agreed that it is irresponsible at this time for anyone to proceed with clinical applications of human germline genome editing.

The committee also agreed that a central registry on human genome editing research is needed in order to create an open and transparent database of ongoing work. The committee asked WHO to immediately begin working to establish such a registry.

The committee has invited all those conducting human genome editing research to open discussions with the committee to better understand the technical environment and current governance arrangements and help ensure their work meets current scientific and ethical best practice.

The committee will operate in an inclusive manner and has made a series of concrete proposals to increase WHO's capacity to act as an information resource in this area.

"The committee will develop essential tools and guidance for all those working on this new technology to ensure maximum benefit and minimal risk to human health," says Dr Soumya Swamanathan, WHO Chief Scientist.