



07 aprile 2015

Nuove forbici molecolari per l'editing genetico



Specifici geni possono essere modificati *in vivo* grazie a una versione più piccola dell'enzima Cas9, una forbice molecolare già utilizzata per ingegnerizzare il genoma. In uno studio sui topi, i ricercatori sono riusciti a modificare l'attività del gene che controlla il colesterolo, diminuendone i livelli nel sangue

03 dicembre 2015

Interventi di editing genetico sempre più mirati e sicuri



Cambiando solo tre amminoacidi dei 1400 circa che formano la proteina Cas9 - le "nanoforbici" usate nella nuova tecnica di modificazione del genoma chiamata CRISPR/Cas9 - è possibile assicurarsi che l'enzima non sbaglia bersaglio e vada a colpire una parte indesiderata del DNA (*red*)

Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats

THE NOBEL PRIZE IN CHEMISTRY 2020



Emmanuelle
Charpentier

Jennifer A.
Doudna

"for the development of a method
for genome editing"

THE ROYAL SWEDISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

OCTOBER 17, 2016

Next Generation Leaders

TIME

**Feng
Zhang,**
*Biomedical
pioneer &
nine others
who are
remaking
the world*



Feng Zhang named a runner-up for TIME's 2016 Person of the Year

MIT and Broad Institute scientist shares recognition with four other scientists for developing CRISPR gene-editing systems.

Batteri e strategie di difesa

In natura sono sempre esistiti prede e predatori. Nel mondo microscopico dei batteri, i predatori, o meglio gli invasori, sono rappresentati dai **batteriofagi**: sono virus che attaccano i batteri, nei quali iniettano il proprio materiale genetico per iniziare la replicazione.

Per difendersi da questo attacco indesiderato, i batteri hanno sviluppato un sistema ingegnoso: delle **“forbici” molecolari estremamente precise** che **tagliano** il DNA dell'invasore e lo inattivano, **impedendo così l'infezione**.

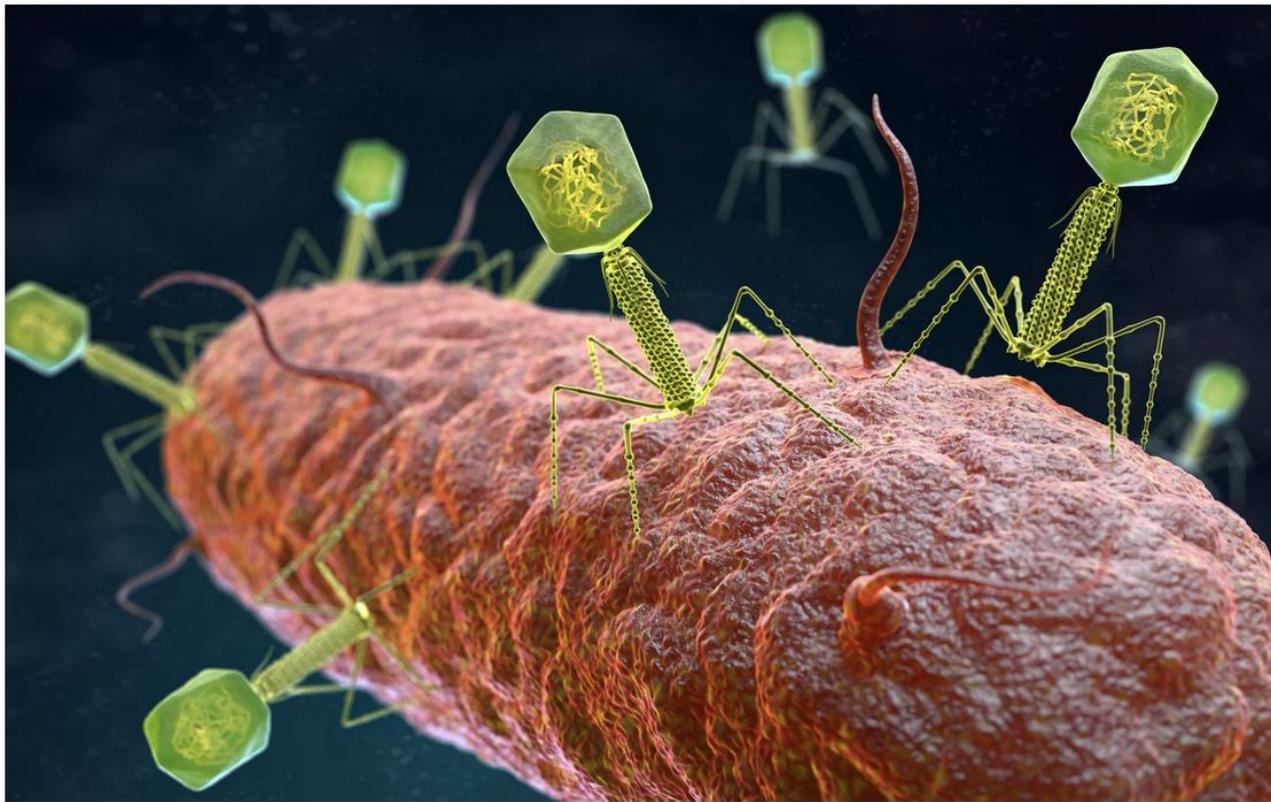
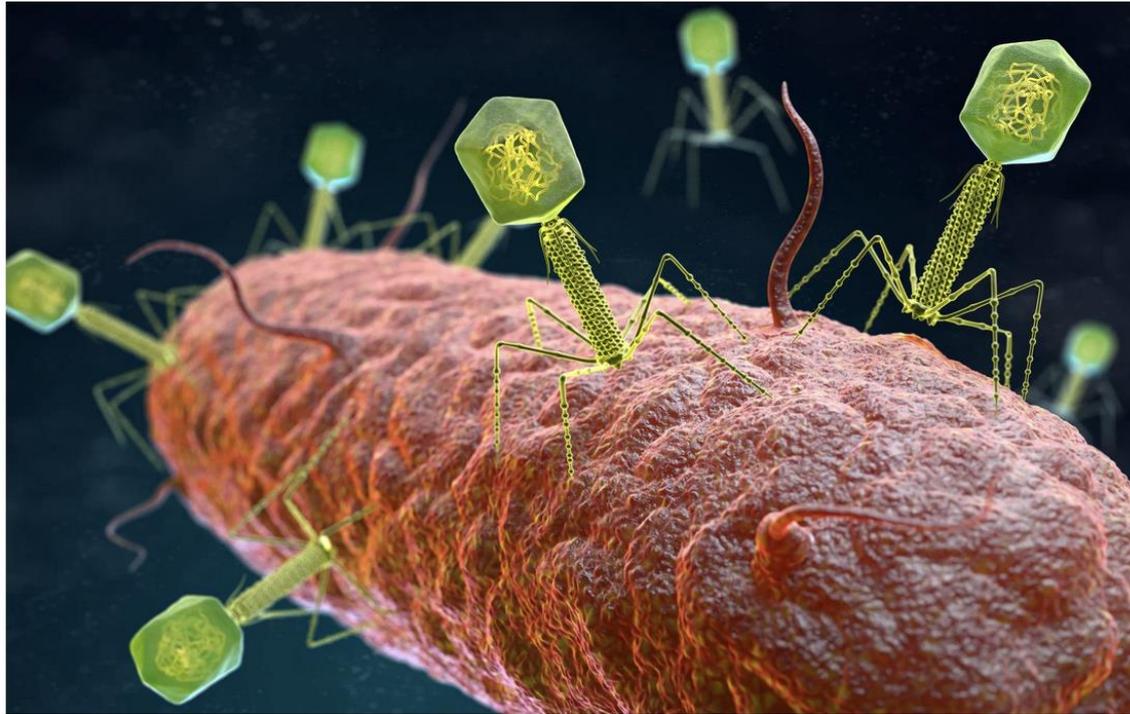


Illustrazione che mostra l'infezione di un batterio da parte di alcuni batteriofagi. I batteriofagi (in verde) si “aggrappano” alla membrana del batterio (in arancione) e iniettano al suo interno il proprio acido nucleico. Per difendersi, il batterio ha sviluppato il sistema CRISPR/Cas9, che taglia l'acido nucleico del batteriofago in punti specifici.

Batteri e strategie di difesa

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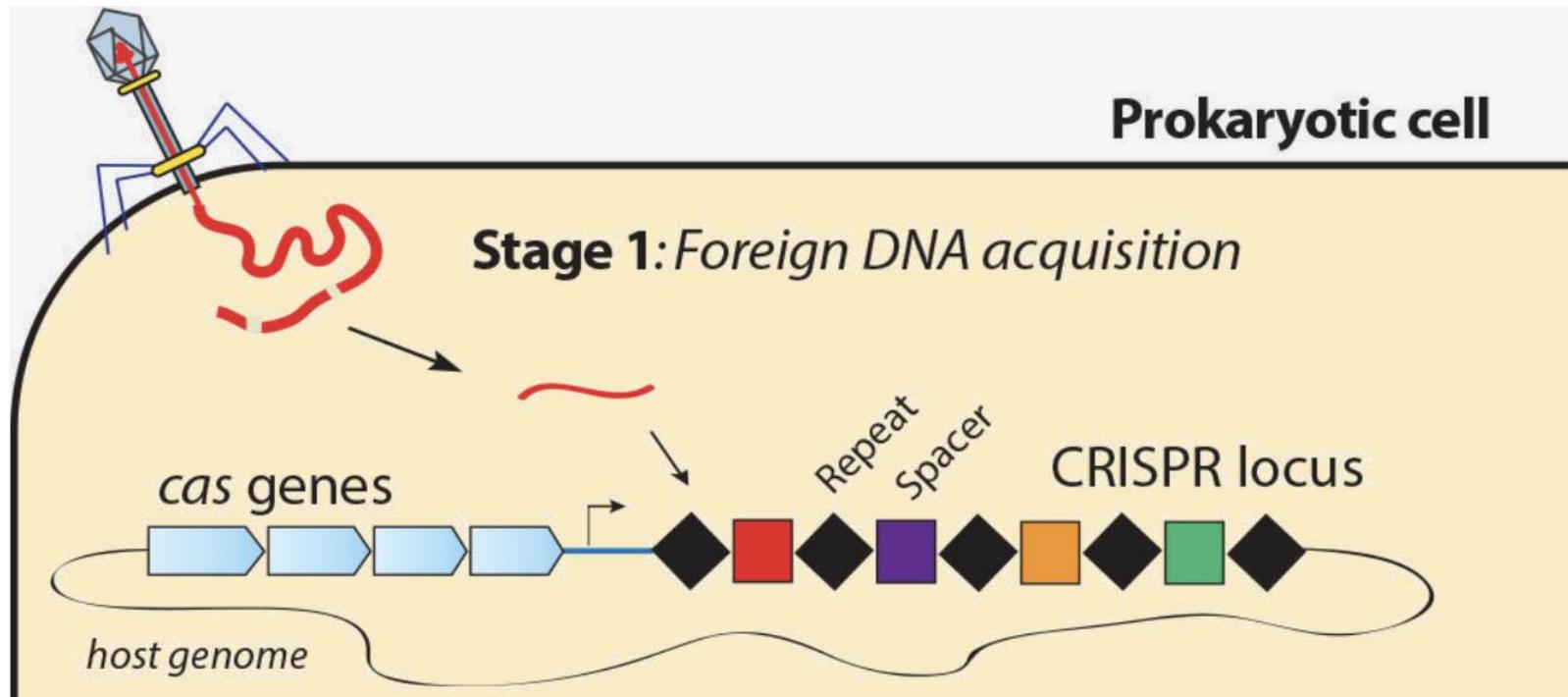
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Ancora più sorprendente è il fatto che, mediante il sistema CRISPR/Cas9, i batteri siano in grado di **memorizzare geneticamente le infezioni già avvenute**, permettendo quindi al batterio di rispondere prontamente ad un eventuale secondo incontro con il patogeno e di tramandare questa risposta alla loro progenie.

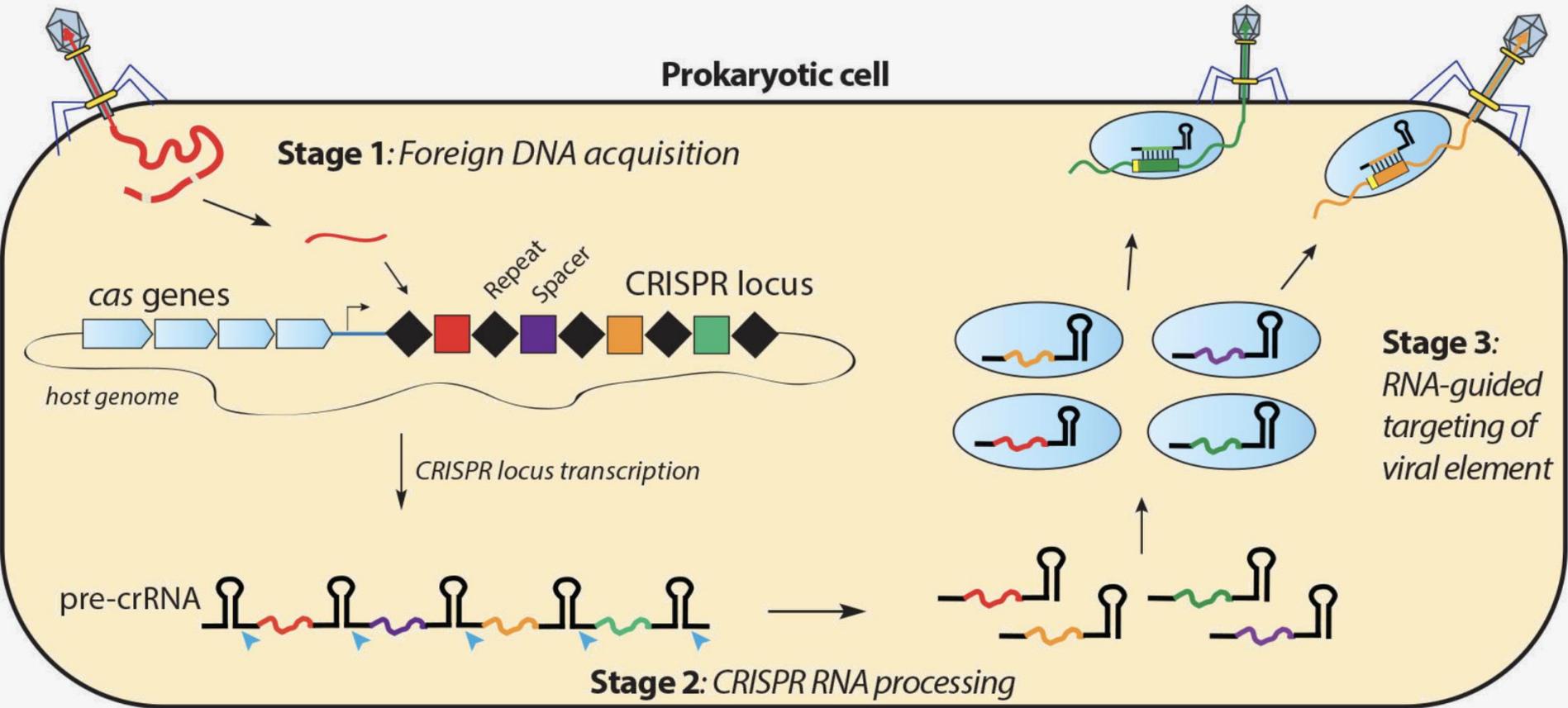
Cosa significa CRISPR? L'acronimo **CRISPR** sta per **C**lustered **R**egularly **I**nterspaced **S**hort **P**alindromic **R**epeats, cioè brevi sequenze di **DNA**, ripetute e palindrome (lette al contrario rimangono invariate) ed interspaziate in modo regolare da sequenze di **DNA** non ripetute.

- In molti ceppi batterici, sono stati identificate regioni costituite da brevi sequenze ripetute (Repeats), intervallate regolarmente da sequenze non ripetute (Spacers).
- **Gli spacers sono frammenti di DNA derivanti da VIRUS che, in precedenza, hanno infettato la cellula batterica.**
- Vicino alle sequenze spacer e repeat, sono presenti I geni per le proteine Cas le quali, identificato il DNA del virus nemico, lo frammentano e incorporano I frammenti di DNA virale nel cromosoma batterico.



- Ad una seconda infezione da parte di uno stesso virus, viene trascritto un RNA, codificante per le proteine CAS e per REPEATs e SPACERS. L'RNA sarà frammentato in segmenti corrispondenti ai singoli spacer derivanti dai frammenti virali.
- Ogni frammento si lega ad una proteina CAS. Una volta formata questa macchina molecolare, il DNA virale verrà analizzato e se al DNA del virus corrisponde una delle sequenze spaziatrici della cellula batterica, essa lo taglia, sopprimendone l'attacco.

Quindi, tramite il sistema CRISPR/CAS, il batterio riesce a difendersi da attacchi virali.



Applicazioni di CRISPR-Cas9

Il sistema di editing genomico permette di:

1. Produrre mutazioni
2. Correggere i difetti di un gene
3. Inserire nel genoma un nuovo segmento di DNA utile alla cellula.
4. Eliminare un gene dal genoma di una cellula

AGRICOLTURA

Si sta cercando di rendere alcune coltivazioni più resistenti, in modo da ridurre fino ad eliminare l'uso di pesticidi

MEDICINA

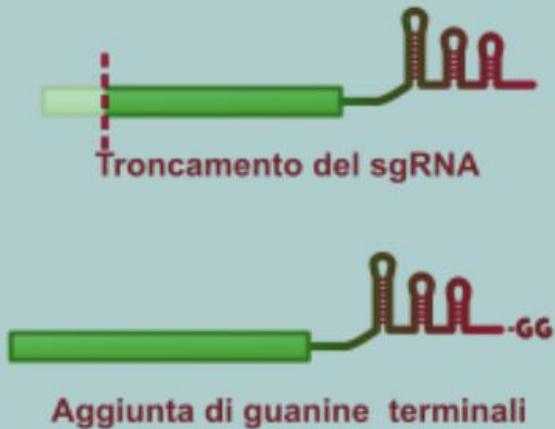
Prevenzione e trattamento di diverse patologie, tra cui Corea di Huntington, Fibrosi Cistica, Distrofia Muscolare di Duchenne, Atrofia Muscolare Spinale, Sclerosi Laterale Amiotrofica e molte altre

Gli effetti collaterali di CRISPR/Cas9 e le attuali strategie per mitigarli.

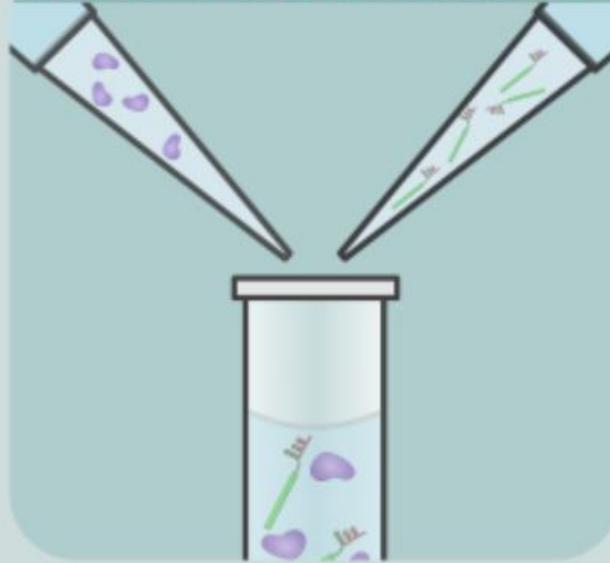
- Il sistema CRISPR/Cas9 spesso non solo taglia esclusivamente nel sito del genoma previsto, ma anche in altri punti indesiderati, chiamati **target aspecifici** (dall'inglese off-targets) con frequenza molto elevata (>50%) ;
- I target aspecifici sono principalmente dovuti ad omologie di sequenza tra sgRNA e sequenze di DNA genomico diverse da quella target, nonché al grado di purezza e stabilità del complesso sgRNA/Cas9 all'interno delle cellule;
- È stato riportato che il tempo che Cas9 trascorre all'interno delle cellule è direttamente proporzionale all'aumento degli eventi di taglio aspecifici, quindi sarebbe vantaggioso che il complesso sgRNA/Cas9 tagliasse il DNA bersaglio immediatamente dopo l'iniezione nella cellula per degradarsi subito dopo.
- I ricercatori hanno implementato numerose strategie per ridurre al minimo i target aspecifici e aumentare la sicurezza del sistema CRISPR/Cas9.

Strategie di minimizzazione degli effetti fuori bersaglio

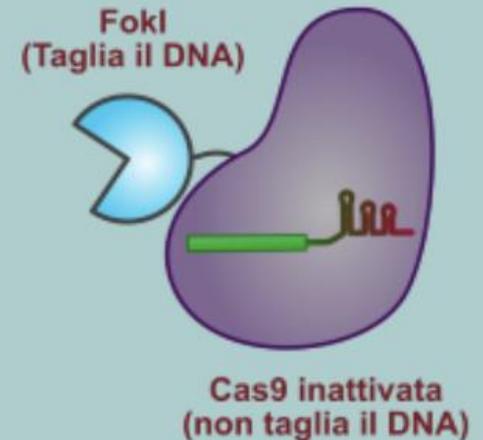
Modifica del sgRNA



Concentrazione/ Formulazione



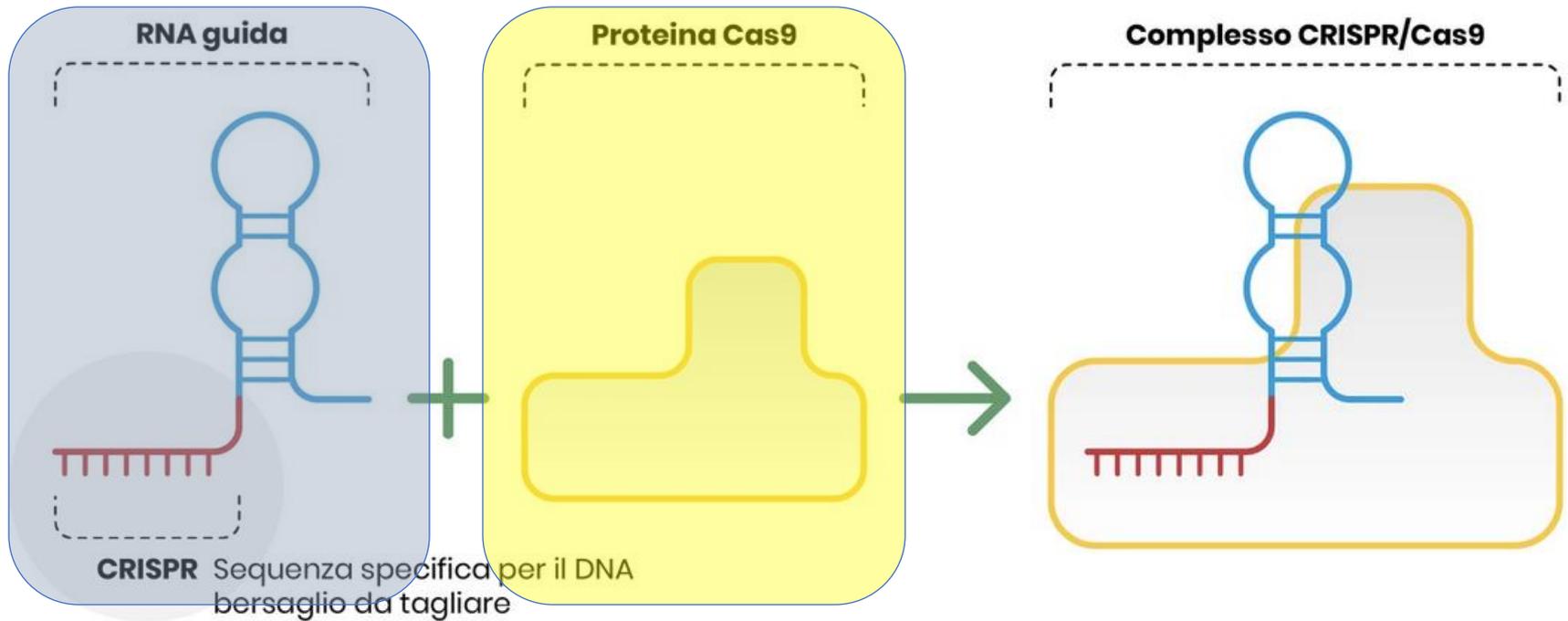
Modifica della Cas9



1. Alterare la sequenza di sgRNA. In particolare, il troncamento del sgRNA o l'aggiunta di due [nucleotidi](#) specifici chiamati guanine alla fine di sgRNA sono in grado di aumentare la specificità verso il bersaglio, diminuendo le mutazioni indesiderate in siti aspecifici al di sotto dell'1%.
2. Controllare la concentrazione e la formulazione del complesso sgRNA/Cas9, al fine di controllarne la stabilità ed il comportamento all'interno delle cellule.
3. Modificare la stessa Cas9, per migliorare ulteriormente la specificità del taglio del DNA (fusione della Cas9 inattiva con il [dominio nucleasico FokI](#)).
4. I progressi della bioinformatica e dell'ingegneria genetica stanno fornendo strumenti per migliorare sgRNA e Cas9 in termini di efficacia e sicurezza.

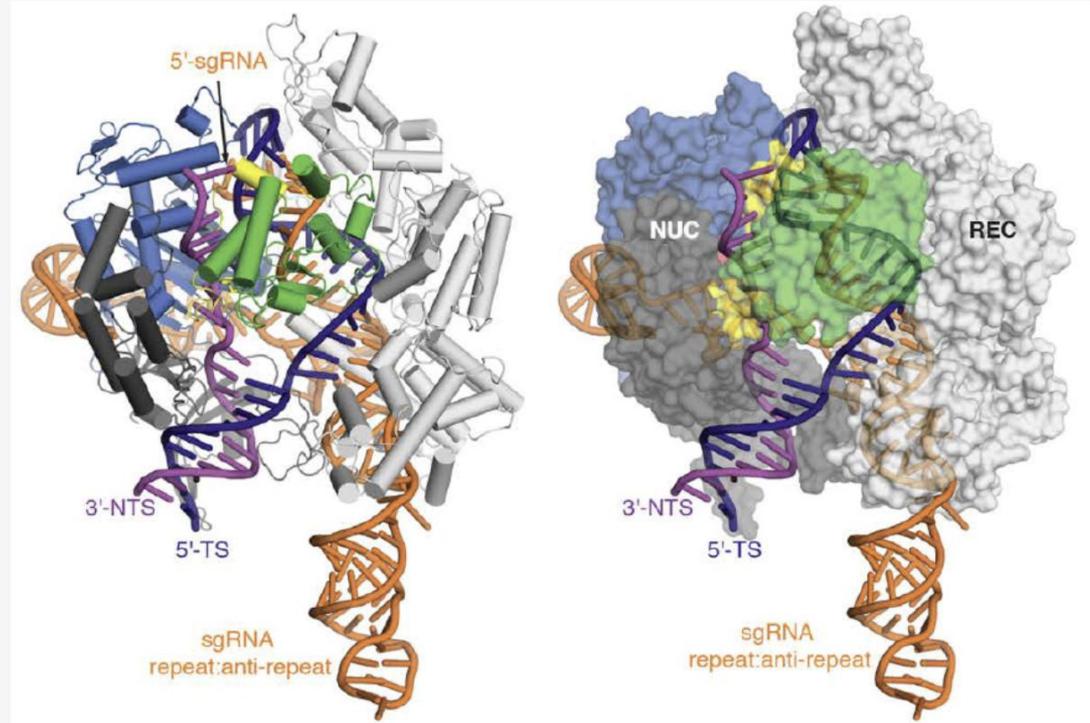
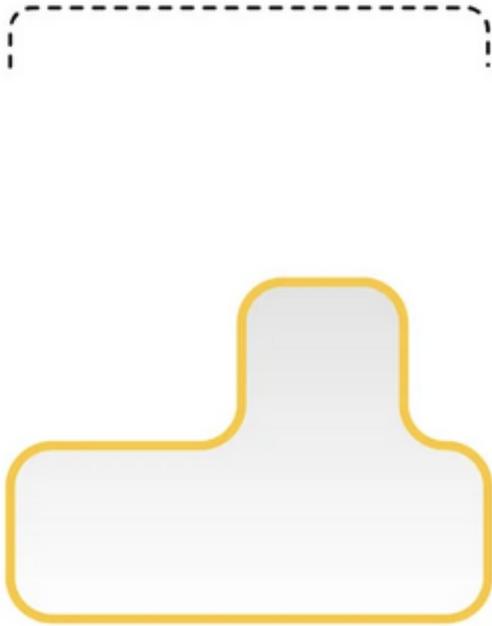
CRISPR/CAS9

Assemblaggio complesso CRISPR/Cas9



CRISPR/CAS9

Proteina Cas9

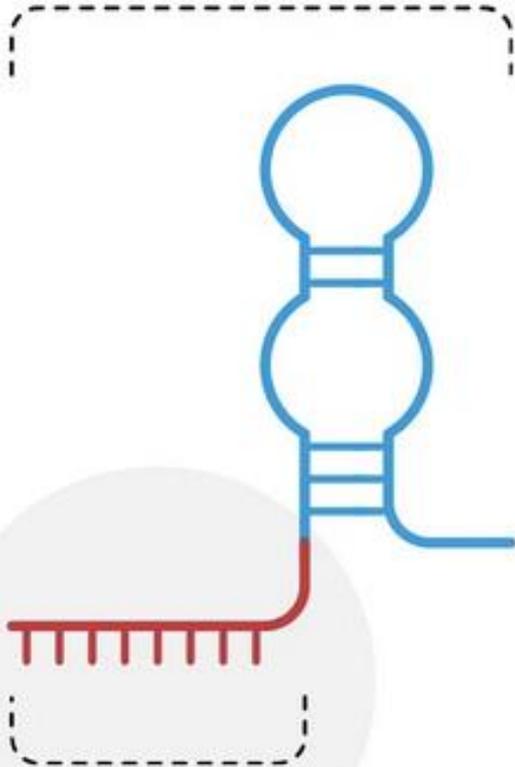


Cas9 bound to target DNA. Crystal structure of Cas9-guide RNA complex primed for DNA cleavage. [Read more...](#)

Cas9 proteins are RNA-guided endonucleases able to generate “double strand breaks” in invasive DNA during and adaptive bacterial response.

CRISPR/CAS9

RNA guida

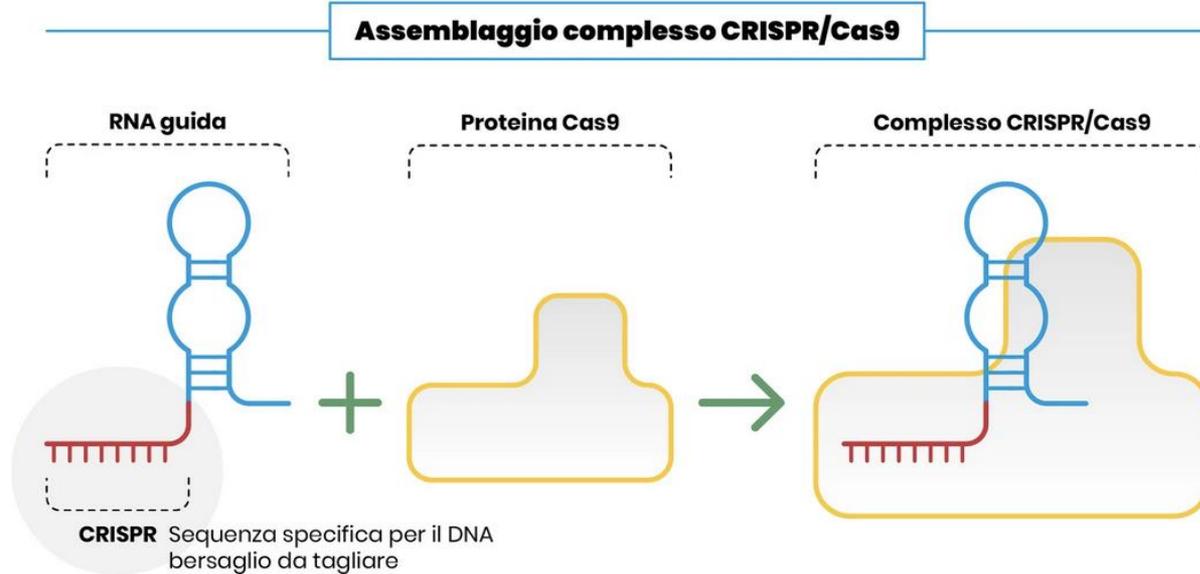


RNA GUIDA

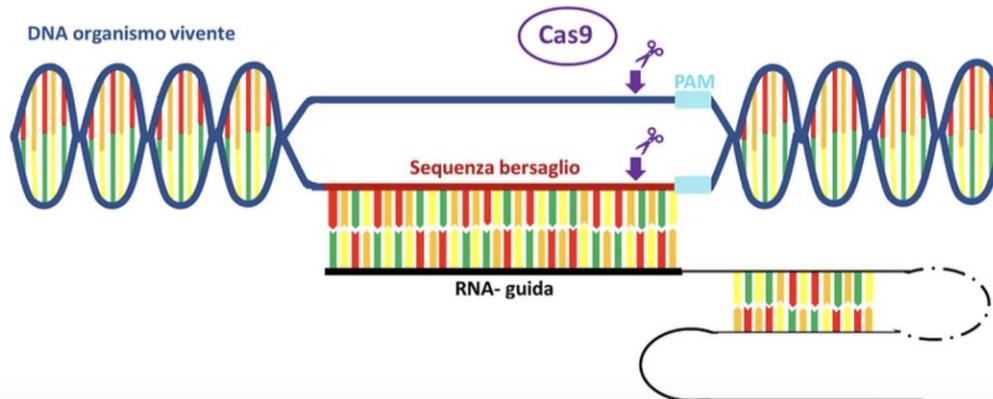
una molecola di RNA con una definite struttura tridimensionale, in grado di guidare la proteina CAS9 sul sito preciso del DNA da tagliare, complementare alla sequenza **CRISPR**, che può essere facilmente modificata in laboratorio.

CRISPR Sequenza specifica per il DNA bersaglio da tagliare

CRISPR/CAS9

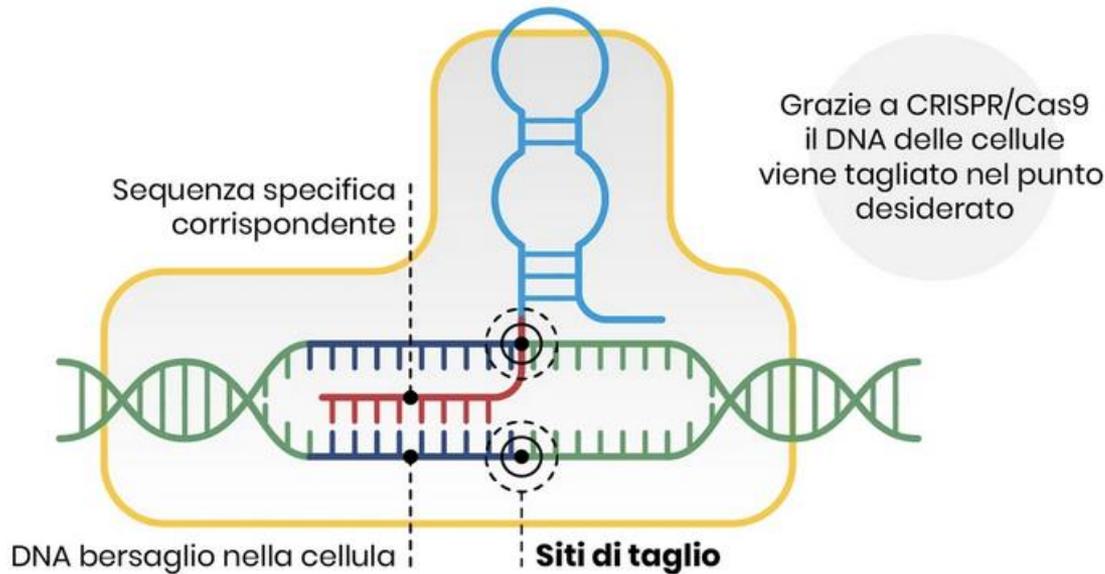


L'azione di CAS9 e' strettamente dipendente dalla presenza di un "protospacer adjacent motif (PAM)", che assicura il corretto posizionamento di CAS9 sul DNA bersaglio



CRISPR/CAS9

Associazione al DNA bersaglio

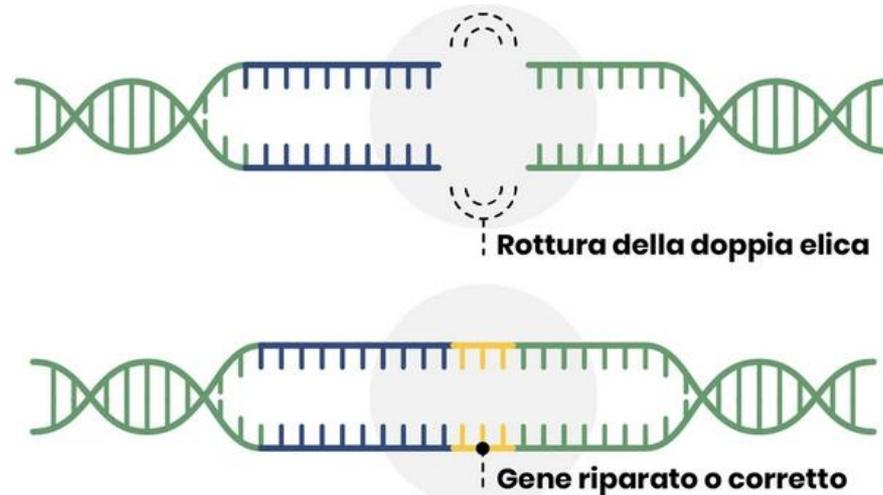


L'RNA guida "orienta" Cas9 indicandole dove effettuare il taglio. Una volta associata a Cas9, l'RNA guida agisce come una specie di "ancora", fermando Cas9 sulla sequenza di DNA scelta.

Cas9, il cui nome sta per *CRISPR-associated**, **introduce una rottura della doppia elica** nel sito prescelto, e può essere programmata per effettuare specifiche modifiche al genoma di una cellula.

CRISPR/CAS9

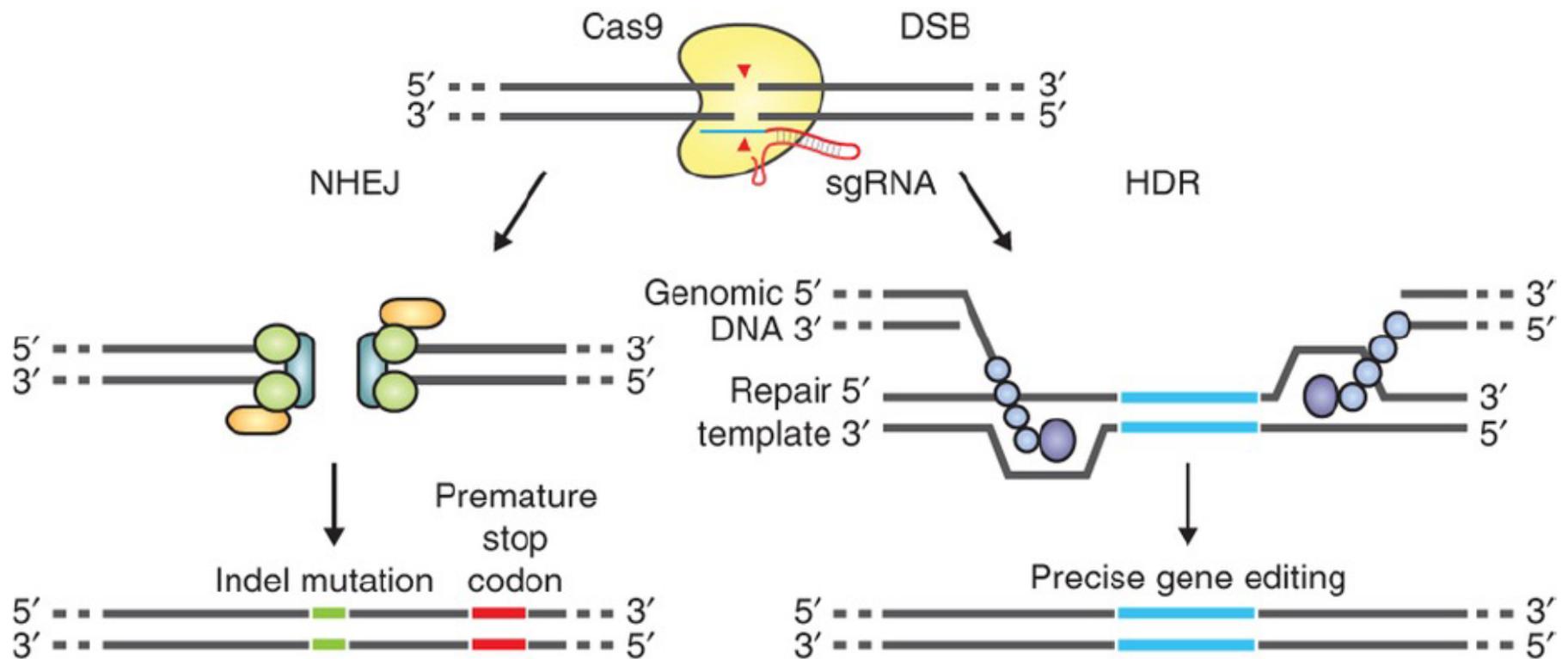
Correzione del DNA



Una volta tagliata, la sequenza di DNA può essere riparata per inserire nuove "informazioni" geniche o per correggere mutazioni patologiche

Una volta tagliato, il DNA può essere aggiustato dai naturali meccanismi di riparazione della cellula; in alternativa, è possibile **eliminare** sequenze di DNA dannose dal genoma bersaglio oppure **sostituire** delle sequenze, andando ad esempio a correggere delle mutazioni causa di malattie

How can cells repair double strand breaks?



Using the **Cas9** endonuclease is possible to induce precise DSBs and this greatly **stimulate genome editing through HR-mediated recombination** events

Despite this, **HDR is a very inefficient mechanism**. The percentage of homologous recombination can be lower in resting cells, as in cardiomyocytes

Ethical concerns

Scientists and all of us should carefully consider the many ethical concerns that can emerge with genome editing, including safety. First and foremost, genome editing must be safe before it is used to treat patients. Some other ethical questions that scientists and society must consider are:

1. Is it okay to use gene therapy on **an embryo** when it is impossible to get permission from the embryo for treatment? Is getting permission from the parents enough?
2. What if gene therapies are too expensive and only wealthy people can access and afford them? That could worsen existing health inequalities between the rich and poor.
3. Will some people use genome editing for traits not important for health, such as athletic ability or height? Is that okay?
4. Should scientists ever be able to **edit germline cells**? Edits in the germline would be passed down through generations.

Most people agree that scientists should not edit the genomes of germline cells at this time because the safety and Scientific communities across the world are approaching germline therapy research with caution because edits to a germline cell would be passed down through generations. Many countries and organizations have strict regulations to prevent germline editing for this reason. The NIH, for example, **does not fund research to edit human embryos.**

Scientists across the world held a conference to talk about these and similar ethical issues at the **International Summit on Human Gene Editing.**

Prevention of muscular dystrophy in mice by CRISPR/Cas9-mediated editing of germline DNA

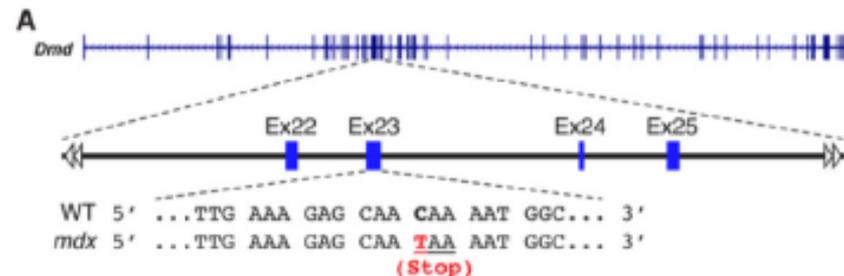
Chengzu Long,^{1*} John R. McAnally,^{1*} John M. Shelton,² Alex A. Mireault,¹ Rhonda Bassel-Duby,¹ Eric N. Olson^{1†}

Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD)

It's a **X-linked pathology**, caused by a point mutation in the gene of Dystrophin (*Dmd*). This gene codifies for a large cytoskeletal structural protein, crucial for muscle cells and membrane integrity.

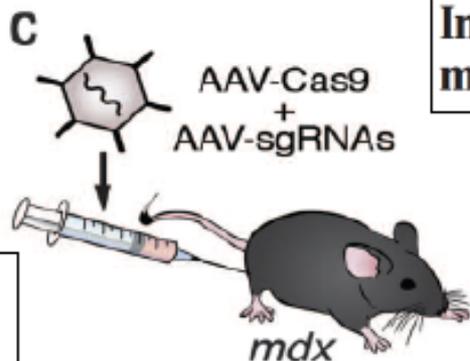
Animal model

mdx mice carrying a single point mutation (nonsense mutation) in the exon 23 of *Dmd* gene.



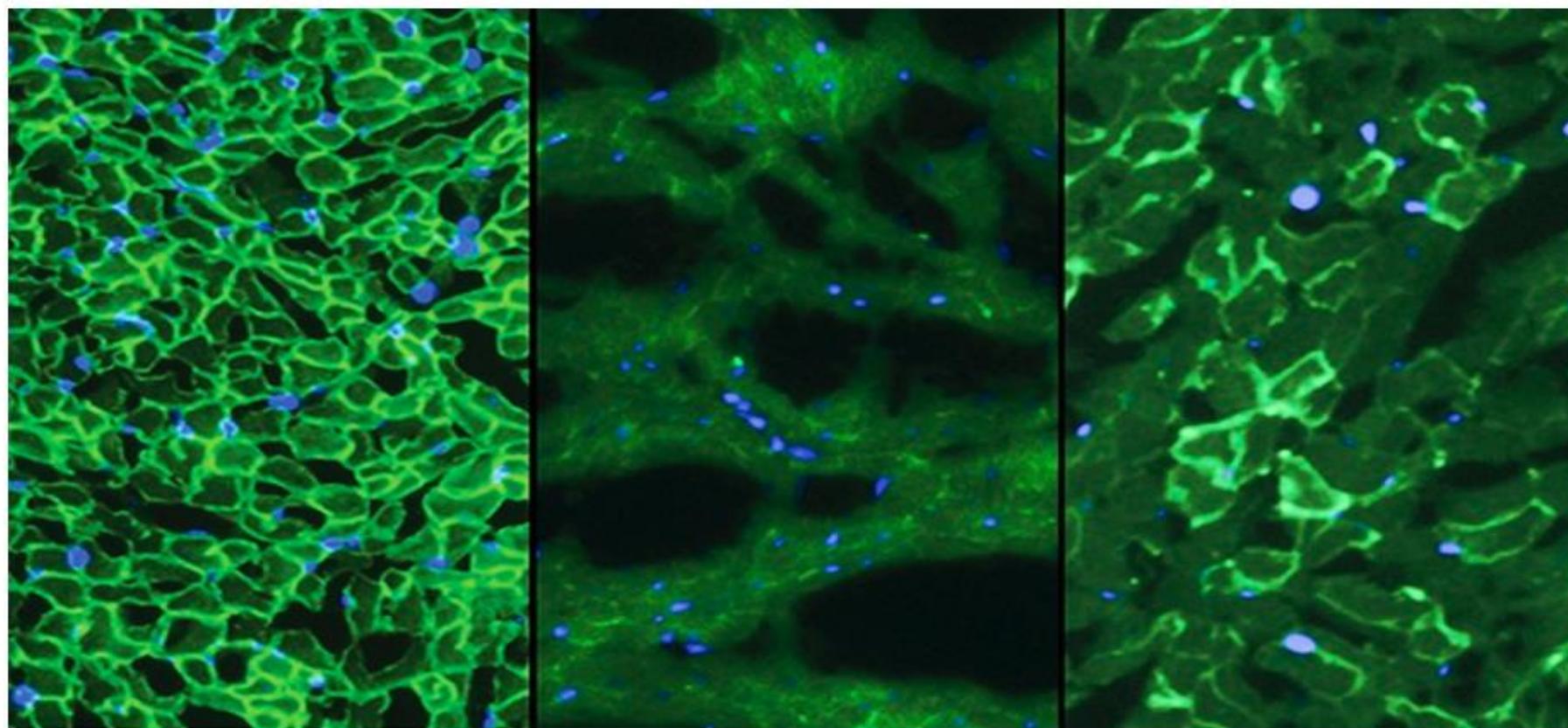
Postnatal genome editing partially restores dystrophin expression in a mouse model of muscular dystrophy

Prevention of muscular dystrophy in mice by CRISPR/Cas9-mediated editing of germline DNA

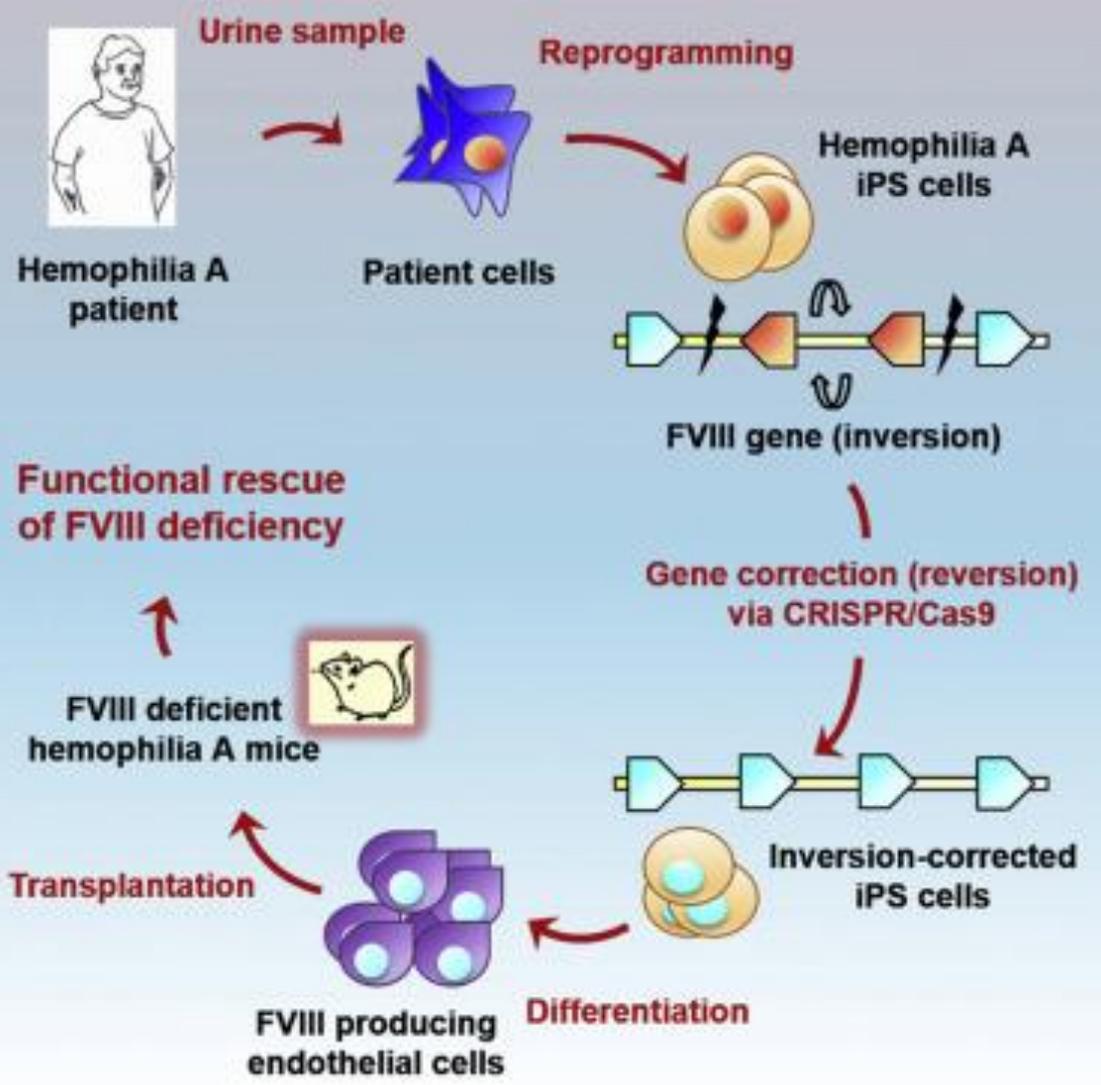


In vivo gene editing in dystrophic mouse muscle and muscle stem cells

In vivo genome editing improves muscle function in a mouse model of Duchenne muscular dystrophy



- **Long *et al.* apply genome editing to “correct” the disease-causing mutation in mice genetically destined to develop the disease.**
- This germline editing strategy kept muscles from degenerating, even in mice harboring only a small percentage of corrected cells.
- Although not feasible for humans, this proof of concept sets the stage for applying genome editing to specific cell types involved in the disease.



Curare l'emofilia?

The X-linked genetic bleeding disorder caused by deficiency of coagulator factor IX, hemophilia B, is a disease ideally suited for gene therapy with genome editing technology.

These studies suggest that CRISPR/Cas-mediated *in situ* gene editing could be a feasible therapeutic strategy for human hereditary diseases, although an efficient and clinically relevant delivery system is required for further clinical studies.

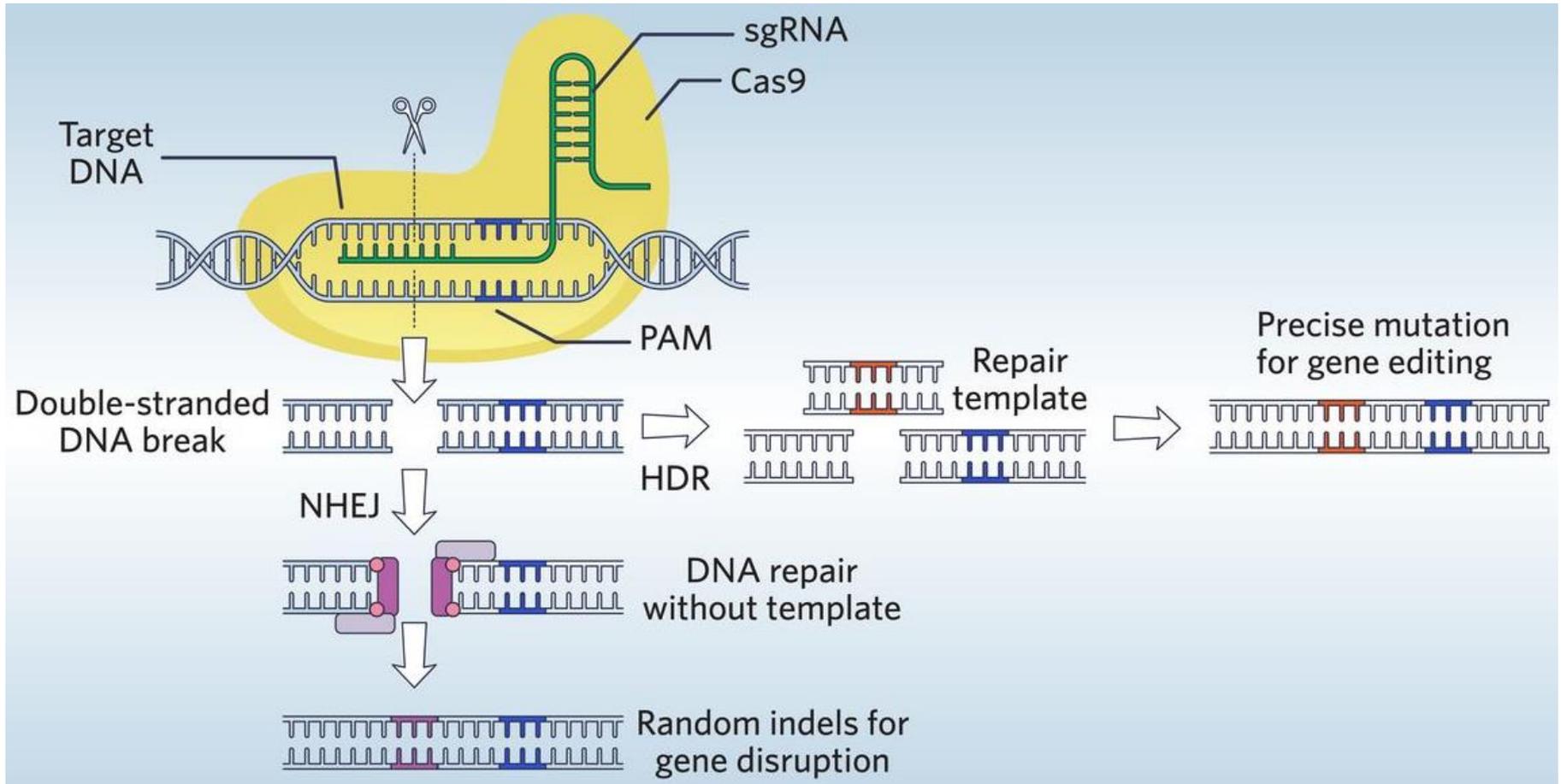
EMBO Molecular Medicine (2016) 8, 477-488

Functional Correction of Large Factor VIII Gene Chromosomal Inversions in Hemophilia A Patient-Derived iPSCs Using CRISPR-Cas9

Chul-Yong Park⁶, Duk Hyung Kim⁶, Jeong Sang Son⁶, Jin Jea Sung, Jaehun Lee, Sangsu Bae, Jong-Hoon Kim⁷, Dong-Wook Kim⁷, Jin-Soo Kim⁷

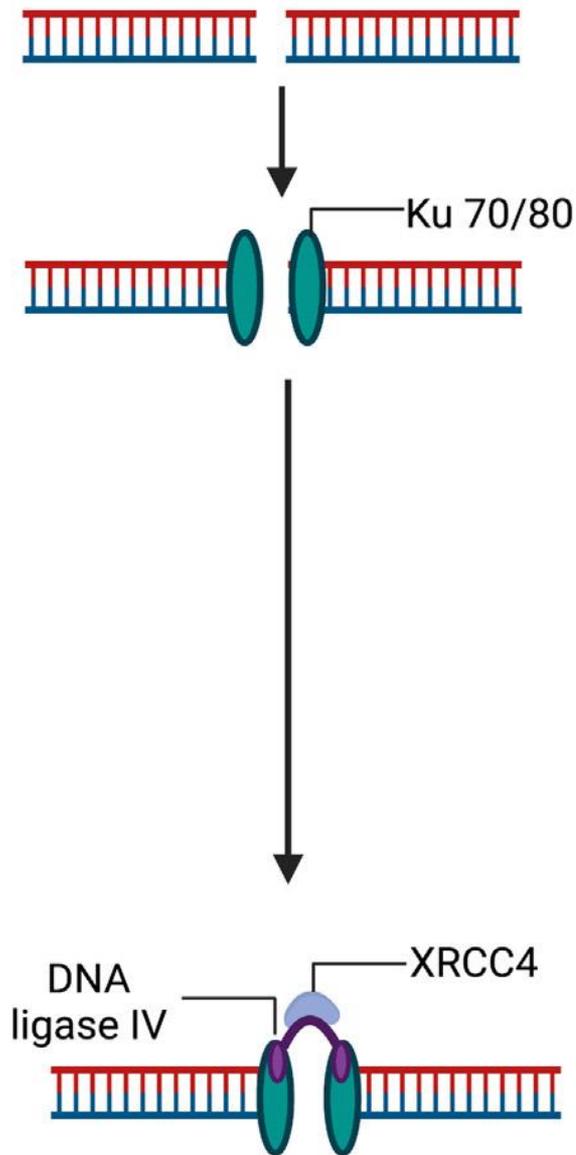
CRISPR-Cas9-mediated homology-directed repair for precise gene editing

Hongyu Liao,^{1,3} Jiahao Wu,^{1,3} Nathan J. VanDusen,² Yifei Li,¹ and Yanjiang Zheng¹



NHEJ introduces semi-random insertion-deletion mutations (indels); HDR achieves precise insertion, deletion, or substitution of nucleotides using donor templates.

NHEJ (Non homologous end joining)



- *The first step of NHEJ is activation of the Ku protein complex, a heterodimeric protein composed of approximately 70- and 80-kDa subunits (Ku70 and Ku80), which form a dyad symmetrical molecule with a preformed ring encircling duplex DNA. This ring recognizes and wraps the end of the broken DNA strand.*
- *The Ku protein promotes the binding of X-ray repair cross-complementing protein 4 (XRCC4) and DNA ligase IV to the DNA ends.*
- *This Ku-XRCC4-DNA ligase IV complex catalyzes the reconstitution of broken double-strand DNA.*
- **NHEJ usually restores the original DNA sequence, but it can lead to imperfect repair and DNA insertion or deletion mutations, particularly during intense DSB formation**

As CRISPR-Cas9 is thought to predominately produce blunt end DSBs, this subpathway is particularly relevant in repairing DSBs caused by Cas9.

HDR (Homology Directed Repair)

HDR is an accurate mechanism due to the requirement of donor DNA templates. Initially, the 5'-ended DSB is resected to provide short 3' ssDNA overhangs, which are recognized and bound by a protein complex, named MRN complex (comprised of Mre1, Rad50, and Nbs1). Other proteins identify and bind to the overhangs, protecting, stabilizing them and facilitating the search for endogenous and exogenous donor templates.

The donor templates invade the 3' ssDNA overhangs, forming an intermediate displacement loop and recruiting DNA polymerase δ to catalyze the synthesis of new strands, completing the DNA repair process.

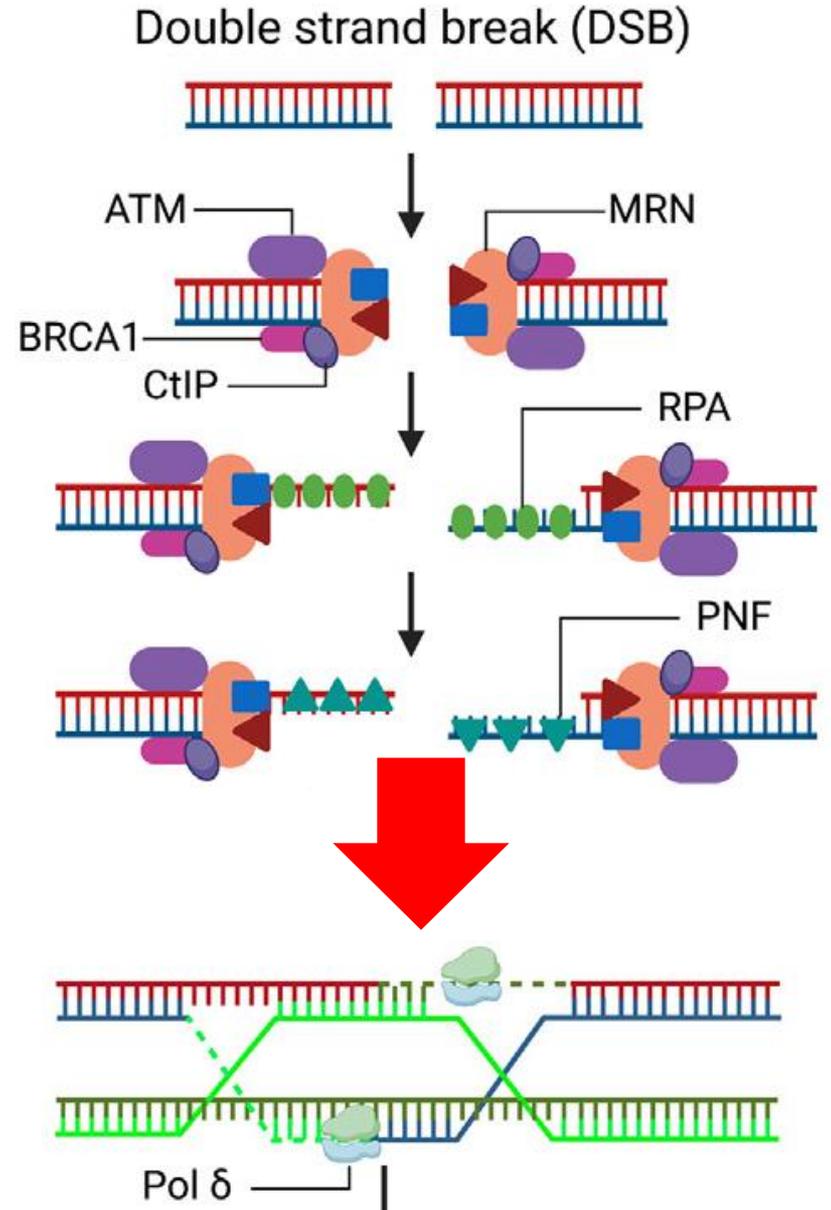


Table 1. Comparison between NHEJ and HDR repair pathway

The subset	NHEJ repair pathway	HDR repair pathway
Subtype repair pathway	blunt-end ligation dependent Ku-XRCC4-DNA ligase IV sub-pathway nuclease-dependent sub-pathway polymerase-dependent sub-pathway	double-strand break repair (DSBR) synthesis-dependent strand annealing (SDSA)
Duration time	about 0.5 h	over 7 h
Template requirement	no	yes
Key factors	Ku complex, XRCC4, DNA ligase IV, DNA-PKcs, et al.	MRN, Rad51, ATM, BRCA1, CtIP, RPA, et al.
Traits	throughout the cell cycle high efficiency predominant repair pathway	restricted in S/G2 phase of cell cycle low efficiency secondary repair pathway
Outcomes	error-free and semi-random insertion-deletion	precise substitution, insertion, or deletion
Usage	gene functional research gene knockout for gene therapy	protein labeling correction of mutant gene for gene therapy precisely mutated gene for mimicking disease precise insertion of therapeutic genes for permanent gene therapy

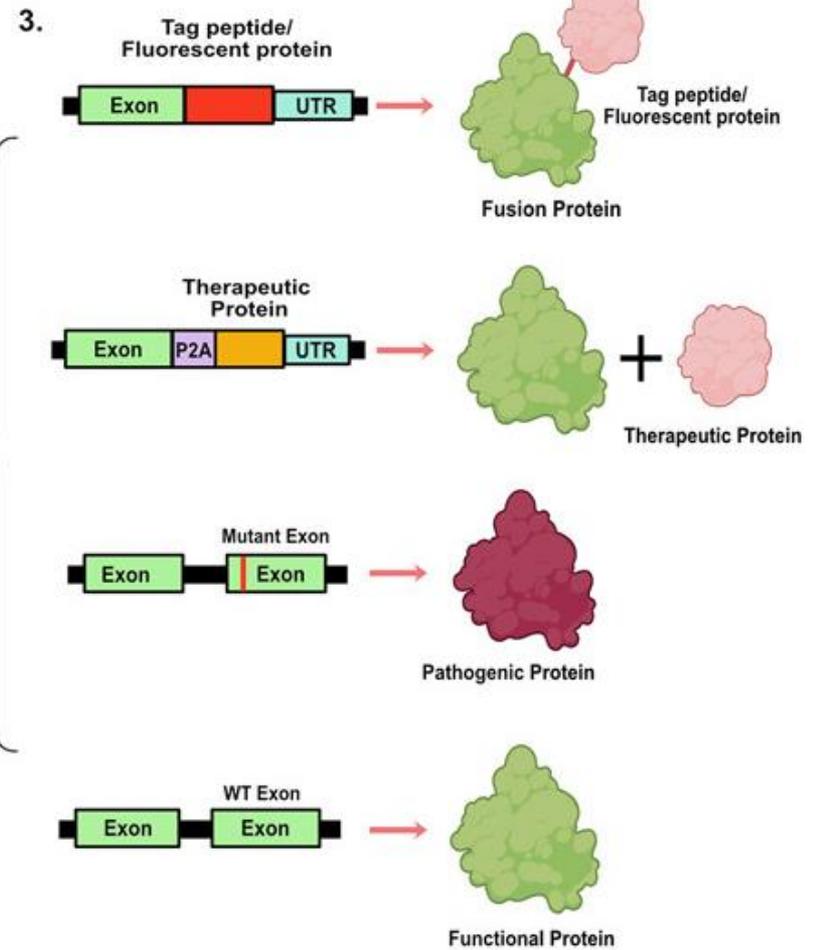
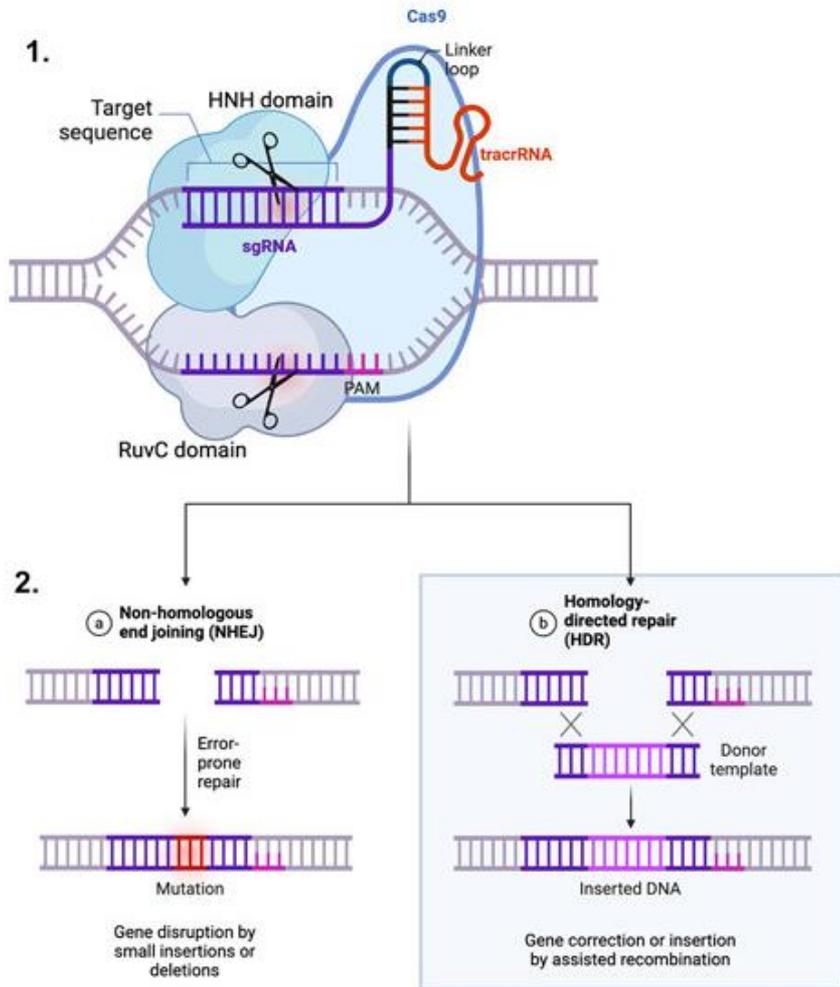


Table 2. Strategy for boosting HDR efficiency

The subset	Methods	Targets	Strengths and weakness
NHEJ pathway inhibition	small-molecule inhibition ubiquitination gene silencing	Ku complex DNA ligase IV DNA PKcs 53PB1	adverse for genome stability applied <i>in vitro</i>
HDR pathway activation	small-molecule activation fusion HDR factors to Cas protein new factor of HDR	Rad family MRN complex CtIP	adverse for genome stability applied <i>in vitro</i>
Donor template modification	improving concentration/numbers of dsDNA templates replaced as ssDNA templates optimize length of templates	concentration of templates structure of templates type of templates length of templates	widely applied <i>in vitro</i> and <i>in vivo</i>
Delivery of Cas9/sgRNA reagents	electroporation microinjection vector transfection	Cas9/sgRNA DNAs Cas9/sgRNA RNAs Cas9/sgRNA RNPs	widely applied <i>in vitro</i> and <i>in vivo</i>

Table 3. CRISPR-Cas9-HDR-mediated gene therapy

The subset	Advantages	Limitations	Examples
<i>Ex vivo</i>	easy manipulation, high gene editing efficiency, well-targeted	problematic for differentiated cells poor transplantation of cells off-target effects	correction of CYBB gene for treating X-CGD correction of HBB gene for treating SCD CAR-T for treating tumor
<i>In vivo</i>	suitable for more diseases, simultaneously target a variety of tissue types	low HDR efficiency off-target effects	correction of OTC gene for treating OTCD correction of <i>LDLR</i> gene for treating HF insertion of therapeutic transgene for treating OTCD

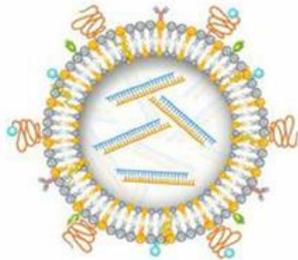


Development of a nanocarrier that:

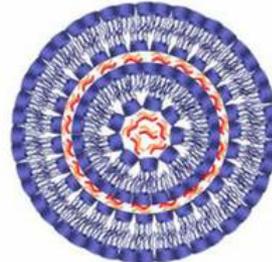
- Encapsulates ncRNAs
- Enters into cells efficiently
- Releases the ncRNAs in the cytosol after endo-lysosomal escape
- Is biocompatible
- Is simple, cheap and made of approved chemical components



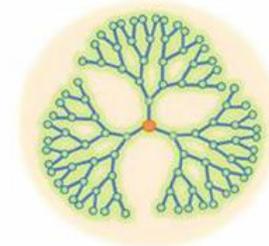
a Polymer



b Liposomes



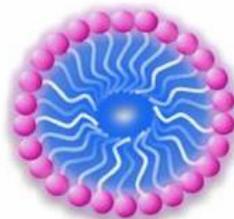
c Amphiphilic cyclodextrins



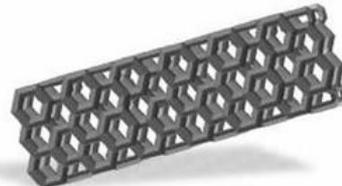
d Dendrimers



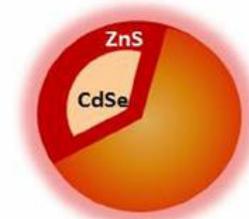
e Gold Nanoparticles



f Micelles



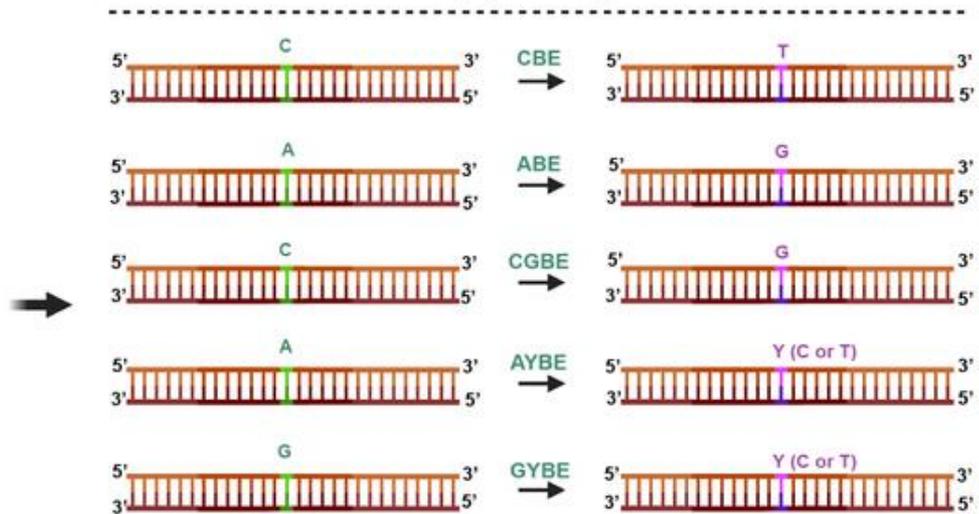
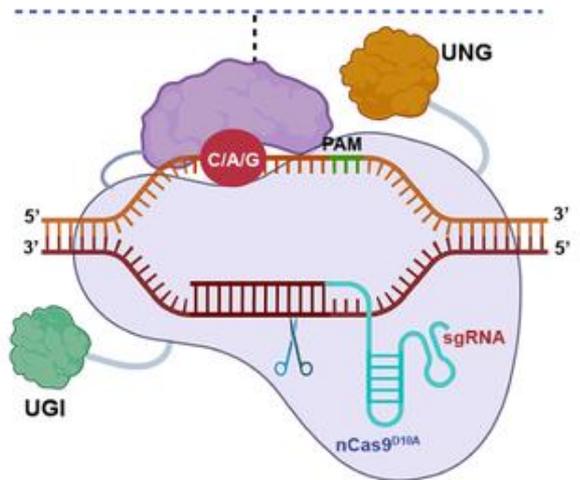
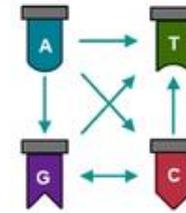
g Carbon nanotubes



h Quantum dots

Base editing

- Cytidine deaminase + uracil DNA glycosylase (UGI): CBE
- Adenosine deaminase: ABE
- Cytidine deaminase + Uracil DNA N-glycosylase (UNG): CGBE
- Adenosine deaminase + N-methylpurine DNA glycosylase: AYBE
- N-methylpurine DNA glycosylase: GYBE



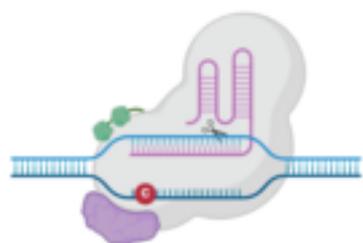
Types of DNA base editors

DNA base editors for genome editing.

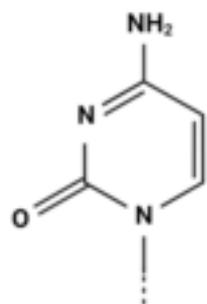
Base editing involves a deaminase, usually fused with a Cas9 (nCas9D10A) nickase, to remove an amino group from a nucleobase on the non-target strand.

The deaminated base is then repaired via base excision or nucleotide excision repair, resulting in base transitions or transversions.

Depending on the type of deaminase used, base conversion can lead to transitions, such as cytosine deaminase for C/G to A/T in cytosine base editors (CBE), or A/T to G/C in adenine base editors (ABE).

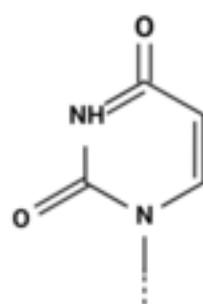
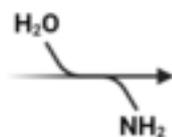


CBE



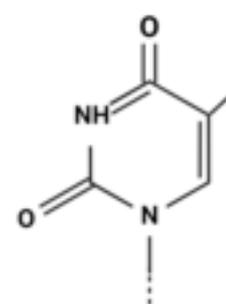
Cytosine

Deamination

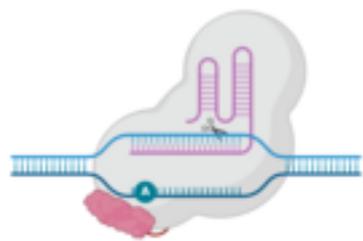


Uridine

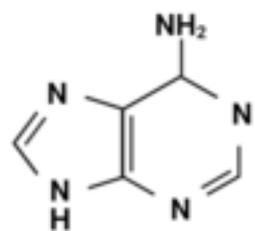
DNA Replication



Thymine

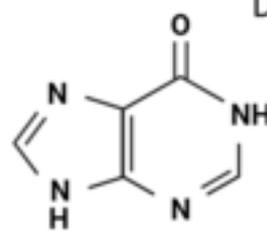
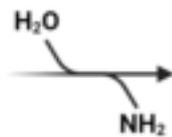


ABE



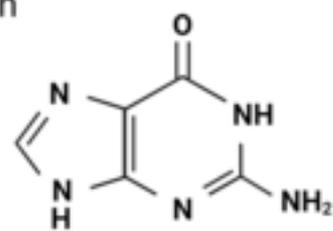
Adenine

Deamination



Inosine

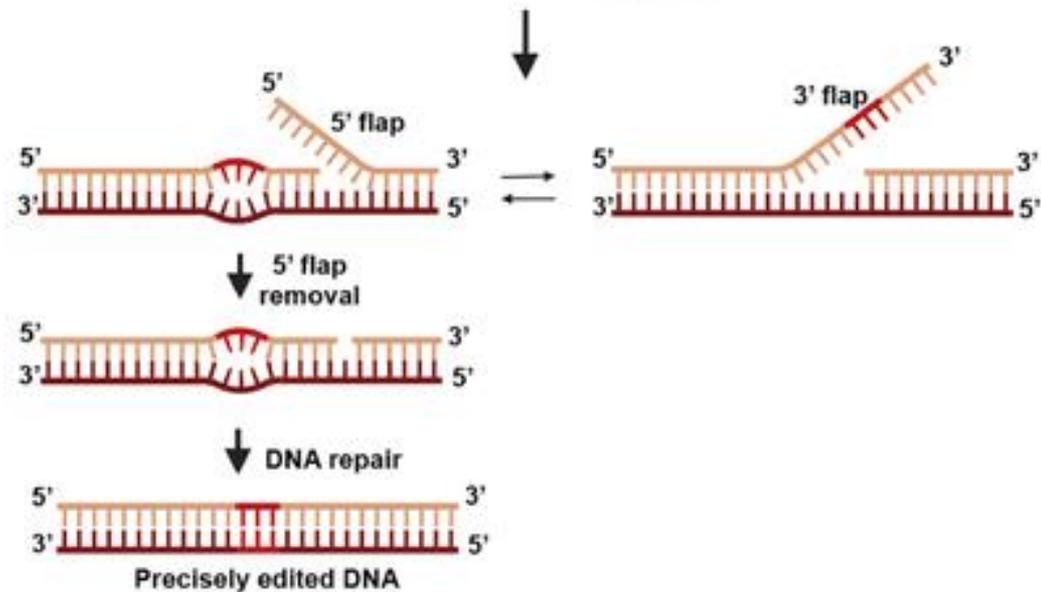
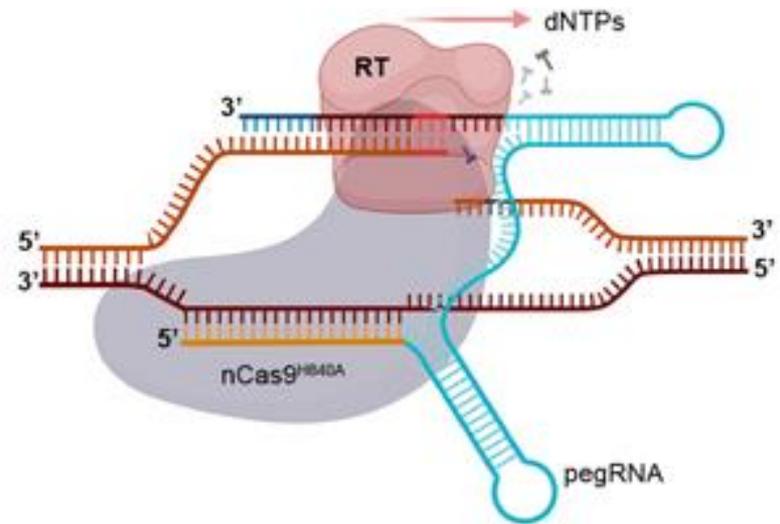
DNA Replication



Guanine

Prime editing

- The prime editing utilizes a pegRNA and a reverse transcriptase (RT) enzyme fused to the C-terminal of a Cas.
- It copies genetic information from the 3' extension of the pegRNA into the nicked end on the non-target strand.
- By introducing desired genetic changes within the RT template of the 3' extension, prime editing enables precise genetic modifications at the target site.
- Prime editing allows for a wide range of precise DNA changes within a genome, including various types of base conversion, DNA insertion, and deletion.



Prime editing for precise DNA modification

How Russians cope with recession

No-go for NGOs in China

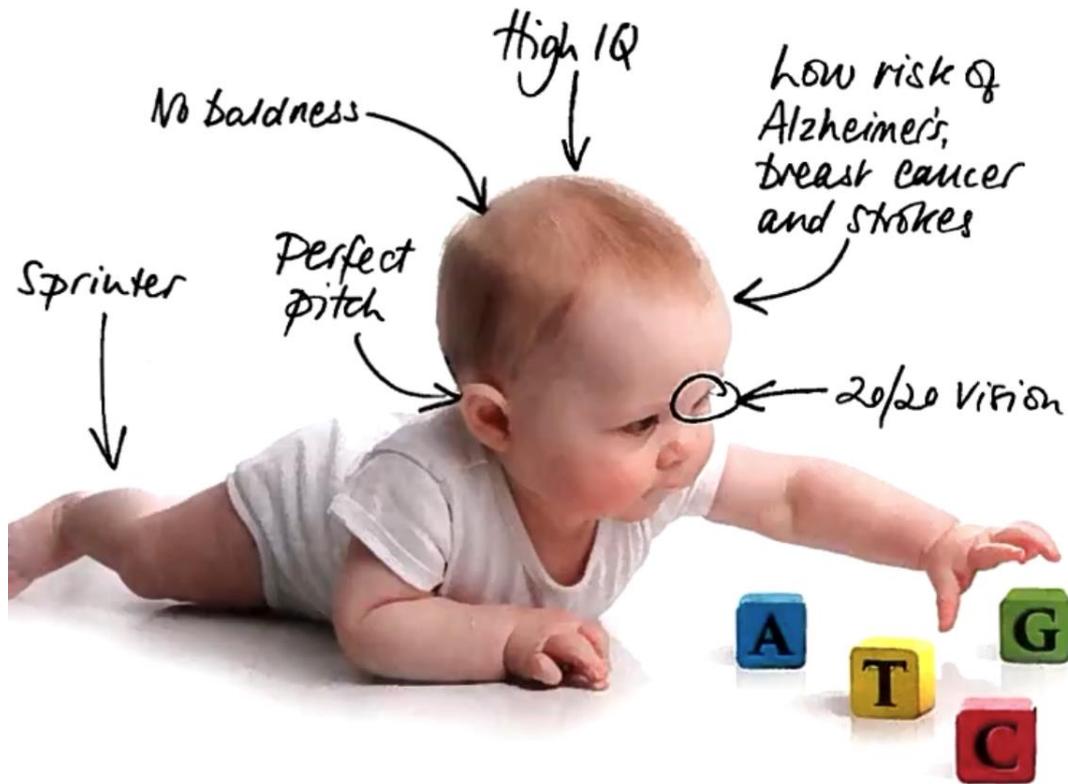
Islamic State's taste for slavery

Commodities: the binge, the hangover

India's poet-politicians

Editing humanity

The prospect of genetic enhancement



Albania	€6.50	Algeria	€6.50	Andorra	€6.50	Austria	€6.50	Bahrain	€6.50	Belgium	€6.50	Brazil	€6.50	Bulgaria	€6.50	Canada	€6.50	China	€6.50	Czech Rep.	€6.50	Denmark	€6.50	Egypt	€6.50	France	€6.50	Germany	€6.50	Greece	€6.50	Hong Kong	€6.50	Hungary	€6.50	India	€6.50	Indonesia	€6.50	Iran	€6.50	Italy	€6.50	Japan	€6.50	Korea	€6.50	Lebanon	€6.50	Libya	€6.50	Lithuania	€6.50	Luxembourg	€6.50	Malaysia	€6.50	Malta	€6.50	Mexico	€6.50	Morocco	€6.50	Netherlands	€6.50	New Zealand	€6.50	Nigeria	€6.50	North Africa	€6.50	Oman	€6.50	Pakistan	€6.50	Panama	€6.50	Peru	€6.50	Poland	€6.50	Portugal	€6.50	Qatar	€6.50	Romania	€6.50	Russia	€6.50	Saudi Arabia	€6.50	South Africa	€6.50	Spain	€6.50	Sweden	€6.50	Switzerland	€6.50	Taiwan	€6.50	Tanzania	€6.50	Turkey	€6.50	USA	€6.50	UK	€6.50	Ukraine	€6.50	Uzbekistan	€6.50	Vietnam	€6.50	Yemen	€6.50
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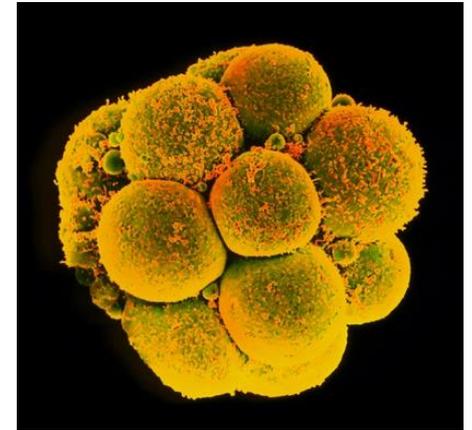
NATURE | NEWS

Second Chinese team reports gene editing in human embryos

Study used CRISPR technology to introduce HIV-resistance mutation into embryos.

Ewen Callaway

08 April 2016



Embrioni umani resistenti al virus Hiv

Sono stati creati in Cina dal gruppo coordinato da Yong Fan dell'Università di Guangzhou e il risultato è stato pubblicato sul *Journal of Assisted Reproduction and Genetics*.

- 231 embrioni provenienti da trattamenti per la fecondazione *in vitro*, non adatti all'impianto perché contenevano una coppia di cromosomi in più
- 26 sono stati modificati,
- su 4 l'esperimento è riuscito

Nel genoma è stata introdotta una mutazione che solo poche persone hanno naturalmente (CCR5 Delta 32) e che protegge dall'Hiv perché altera una delle principali proteine che impediscono al virus di entrare nelle cellule, il recettore CCR5.

L'appello degli scienziati su Nature: stop alla sperimentazione clinica dell'editing genetico su gameti ed embrioni umani

Una **moratoria di almeno 5 anni** che per il momento blocchi qualsiasi **sperimentazione clinica dell'editing genetico su gameti ed embrioni umani** destinati all'impianto nell'uomo: a proporlo oggi su Nature è un gruppo internazionale di scienziati e bioeticisti che invita la comunità scientifica a una presa di responsabilità di fronte alle controverse applicazioni di una tecnica di modificazione genica dalle grandi potenzialità ma su cui c'è ancora tanto da studiare. **L'invito a tutti i Paesi del mondo è di aderire normativamente alla sospensiva** e avviare un processo di valutazione che, pur rispettandone l'autonomia rispetto alle scelte finali, garantisca cautela, trasparenza e condivisione internazionale anticipata dell'eventuale decisione di aprire questa strada.

CRISPR EMBRYOS AND THE LAW

Regulations governing genetic modification in human embryos vary. Some countries ban the practice through legislation that carries criminal penalties; others have unenforceable guidelines.

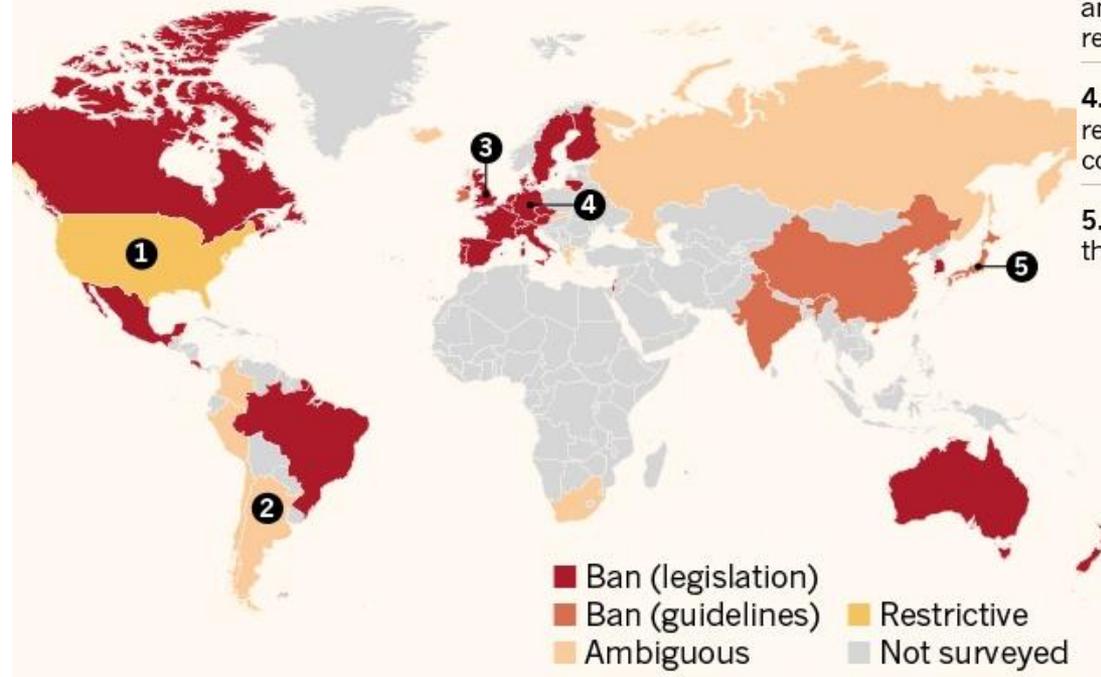
1. THE UNITED STATES does not allow the use of federal funds to modify human embryos, but there are no outright genome-editing bans. Clinical development may require approval.

2. ARGENTINA bans reproductive cloning, but research applications of human-genome editing are not clearly regulated.

3. THE UNITED KINGDOM's independent Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority may permit human-genome editing for research, but the practice is banned in the clinic.

4. GERMANY has strict laws on the use of embryos in assisted reproduction. It also limits research on human embryos, and violations could result in criminal charges.

5. JAPAN, like China, India and Ireland, has unenforceable guidelines that restrict the editing of a human embryo's genome.



Where in the world could the first CRISPR baby be born?

A look at the legal landscape suggests where human genome editing might be used in research or reproduction