

Ethical, Legal, and Social Issues Arising from Human Nuclear Genome Editing

1. **The Bioethics Advisory Committee (BAC), Singapore**, is pleased to share its latest report titled 'Ethical, Legal, and Social Issues Arising from Human Nuclear Genome Editing'.

The report examines key ethical considerations arising from the use of Human Nuclear Genome Editing (HNGE) technologies in biomedical research, clinical research, and healthcare. It reflects the outcome of extensive study, consultations with local and international experts, and careful deliberation by the committee. The report is also available on the BAC website [here](#).

2. **The NCCS Response *in full* (pages 170 – 191)**
3. **The NCCS Response: Executive Summary (pages 168 – 169)**

The following contains an executive summary of our response from The National Council of Churches in Singapore (NCCS) to the Bioethics Advisory Committee (BAC) consultation paper "Ethical, Legal and Social Issues Arising from Human Nuclear Genome Editing".¹

1. We first set out our understanding of Christian bioethics as part of our deliberation of Christian ethics, which in turn aims to paint a picture of the Christian moral vision. The Christian moral vision is concerned with human identity and the protection and flourishing of that identity in response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. We highlight, from a Christian standpoint, the danger of the philosophy driving much of our general bioethics and biotechnology toward a vision of human flourishing that consists solely in the elimination of suffering and the expansion of the boundaries of human choice.
3. We resonate with the BAC paper on its reasonable optimism regarding the promise of HNGE, and throw caution by drawing attention to the dangers of hype surrounding HNGE. In addition, we question what are the safeguards and limits that will enable us (as humanity) to say 'enough' in our pursuit of the further developments in HNGE.
4. We reflect on the kind of collective moral vision that will likely happen in a genetically-focused or a genetically-obsessed society, and question aspects of that society where genetic solutions are sought after at the expense of other more morally appropriate or proportionate techniques, or that pre-disease risk states are treated as if they were a disease in themselves.
5. While agreeing with the BAC paper's recommendation that the '14-day rule' remains (and not be extended to 28 days), we lay out our Christian position that the nascent human being in the form of an embryo is a human person even at the earliest stage. And since human persons are made in the image of God, they possess inviolable dignity and value from conception. As such, we are unable to support any means that involves the creation, destruction, and/or the eugenic selection of human embryos. With specific reference to heritable germline editing, we hold that the inevitable alteration of our human nature will have an inimical effect on our capacity to pursue the human good in terms of our flourishing.

6. We consider the impact on society, and state our concern that the advent of widespread genetic screening and therapies will lead to a society that sees genetic diseases as a condition to be avoided at all costs, even life itself. To that concern, the church declares unambiguously that the presence of genetically compromised persons in society is good, simply because they are there and they are the gift of a loving God who welcomes us all. If this last statement is affirmed, steps must be taken to ensure that the development of HNGE in medical care and research does not come with an increase in discrimination or stigmatisation (e.g., only a certain affluent segment of society can afford it) that results in an economic distributive injustice.
7. We recommend that yardsticks be clearly stated in order that we can draw the line and distinguish between therapy and enhancement.

In conclusion, we affirm our response that the Church is neither a pure advocate nor opponent of technology or advancement. Instead, it is in being captured by our moral vision that grants us the dignity, freedom, and responsibility to choose what is right and sound, and not only what is expedient or popular. We find our bearings within that moral vision in the givens of human life, the dignity of the human person, and our care for the common good, not just the individual. The key question that is addressed in the public bioethics of gene editing is the question about what it means to be human: what vision of humanity lives at the heart of our public reasoning? To that question we are appreciative of BAC's stance that a human project as large and momentous as HNGE must continue to consider the vast wealth of human wisdom: social, political, scientific, philosophical, and, critically, moral and religious capital. In the process, we must hope and pray that we do not end up trading in wisdom for knowledge.

¹ Bioethics Advisory Committee, *Ethical, Legal and Social Issues Arising from Human Nuclear Genome Editing* (Singapore: 2024), <https://www.bioethics-singapore.gov.sg/>