

Statement on the “birth of genome edited babies” reported in the media

November 30, 2018

The birth of twin girl babies from human embryos applied genome editing technique to acquire resistance to human immunodeficiency virus (so-called AIDS virus) infection was reported by the associate professor He Jiankui from the Southern University of Science and Technology of China at the 2nd International Summit on Human Genome Editing (November 27-29, 2018, Hong Kong). If this report verified, it is totally unacceptable egregious action disregarding the value of human life.

The Japan Medical Association (JMA) and the Japanese Association of Medical Sciences (JAMS) strongly demand to all who works in the related medical practice and life science research to ensure such irresponsible and unethical misconduct never happens again.

Human embryo is characterized as the “germ of human life” and should specifically respect to maintain “human dignity” that consists fundamental values of the society.

It is obvious the reported work harms and violates physical health, mental health and social well-being rights of the twin babies, and seriously deviated from the international ethical standards by ignoring human dignity and devalue human life.

The medical necessity and validity to apply genome editing technique to human embryos is utterly unconvincing as there are other existing medical approaches for HIV infection prevention. The application of this technology to human embryos and germ cells shall result in transmitting and spreading of edited loci across generations and its impact to human race is still immensely unclear. For those reasons, the reported work is extremely irresponsible and both scientifically and ethically unacceptable from medical, technical and safety point of view.

Advancement of such powerful techniques are awaited with expectation of promised contribution for prevention and treatment of diseases. The JMA and JAMS will actively engage and lead discussions and awareness raising on ethical topics related to the new technologies amongst all in the field of medicine. We are committed to ensure establishing

appropriate and clear rules on the use of genome editing technology for advancing medicine and life science area to achieve our missions and expectations.

The JMA and JAMS will jointly continue to keep close monitoring over application of upcoming new technologies in medicine in order to make sure such unethical actions never to repeat.

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