

Bioethical Issues in Modern Biotechnology and Medical Research

A Strategic Paper on Major Bioethical Challenges

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
Applied Ethics and Bioethics

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Date of Submission:

24th May 2026

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Abstract

Recent breakthroughs in biotechnology have created remarkable opportunities to improve human health, extend life expectancy, and enhance quality of life. However, these developments have also introduced significant bioethical challenges related to dignity, consent, safety, and fair access. This paper examines key ethical issues across four major areas: genetic testing, cloning, stem cell research, and gene-editing technologies like CRISPR-Cas9. Utilizing core ethical frameworks such as principlism, deontology, consequentialism, and virtue ethics, the analysis explores how differing moral perspectives influence regulations and practices. The research employs a systematic review of scholarly literature, international guidelines, and prominent case studies. Results reveal that despite the great potential of biotechnology, ongoing problems in regulatory consistency, informed consent, equity, and the management of heritable genetic modifications continue to raise ethical concerns. The paper advocates for globally harmonized, value-driven regulations that prioritize human dignity, openness, and broad stakeholder involvement. It also highlights the essential role of ethics committees and the need to enhance their independence and resources. Ultimately, the paper argues that ethical progress in biotechnology depends on ongoing collaboration among scientists, ethicists, policymakers, and the wider public.

1. Introduction

Biotechnological innovation has rapidly accelerated in the twenty-first century. Advances such as human genome sequencing and CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing have brought science fiction concepts into real-world applications, including clinical trials, fertility treatments, agriculture, and defense research. As biotechnology's capabilities grow, so too does the need for careful ethical oversight.

Bioethics as a discipline in the mid-20th century as a response to serious ethical breaches in medical research, most notably those that occurred during World War II and the Tuskegee Syphilis Study in the United States (1932–1972). Foundational guidelines such as the Nuremberg Code (1947) and the Declaration of Helsinki (1964) set out core principles like voluntary informed consent and ethical oversight for research involving human participants (World Medical Association [WMA], 2013). These principles remain fundamental to biomedical ethics today, even as new technologies challenge how they are applied.

Bioethics developed as a field in the mid-20th century as a reaction to serious ethical violations in medical research, particularly the experiments during World War II and the Tuskegee Syphilis Study in the United States (1932–1972). Foundational documents like the Nuremberg Code (1947) and the Declaration of Helsinki (1964) introduced essential principles such as voluntary informed consent and ethical oversight for research involving human participants (World Medical Association [WMA], 2013). These guidelines continue to serve as the foundation of modern biomedical ethics, even though emerging technologies continue to challenge their relevance and application.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Ethical Theories in Biomedical Context

Ethical theory forms the foundation for analyzing bioethical challenges. Beauchamp and Childress (2019) introduced principlism, a leading approach in biomedical ethics, which centers on four key principles: autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. These principles provide a flexible yet organized moral framework for use in various clinical and research settings. Autonomy emphasizes that individuals must have the ability and information to make informed decisions; beneficence requires actions that benefit patients and society; non-maleficence stresses minimizing harm; and justice calls for fair distribution of benefits and risks.

Deontological ethics, most closely associated with Immanuel Kant, bases moral duties on rational principles rather than consequences. Kant's categorical imperative—acting only according to rules that could be universal laws—rejects treating people as mere tools for scientific purposes (Kant, 1785/1993). In biotechnology, Kantian ethics objects to research practices that use embryos or participants solely for scientific gain, and strictly opposes reproductive cloning as a violation of human dignity (Sandel, 2007).

Consequentialist ethics, especially in its utilitarian form, judges actions by their outcomes. Utilitarian thinkers like Singer (2011) argue that the benefits of stem cell research—potentially helping millions with degenerative diseases—outweigh the destruction of a few surplus IVF embryos, which do not have sentience. This viewpoint supports cost-benefit analyses and guides policy in places such as the United Kingdom, where embryonic stem cell research is allowed under strict regulation (Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority [HFEA], 2022).

Virtue ethics, based on Aristotle's philosophy, focuses on the character of moral actors rather than rules or results. In biotechnology, virtue ethics asks what qualities—such as prudence, honesty, and compassion—should define scientists, policymakers, and institutions (MacIntyre, 1981). This approach is increasingly used in biomedical education and professional standards, especially in cases like the 2018 gene-edited baby scandal involving He Jiankui, whose disregard for ethical standards highlighted a lack of virtuous conduct.

2.2 Genetic Testing: Privacy, Determinism, and Discrimination

The development of next-generation sequencing has made whole-genome sequencing much more affordable and accessible to the public. Companies like 23andMe and AncestryDNA have turned genetic testing from a clinical service into a consumer product (Lucivero & Prainsack, 2015). This widespread access to genetic information brings up important issues around privacy, how genetic data is managed, and the risk of genetic discrimination.

Research by Hull et al. (2021) shows that many people misunderstand the limitations of direct-to-consumer genetic tests, often thinking that polygenic risk scores are definite predictions rather than probabilities. This confusion can lead to anxiety and unnecessary medical visits. There are also significant structural inequalities—most genetic databases are dominated by people of European descent, making genomic medicine less effective for those from African, Asian, or Indigenous backgrounds (Popejoy & Fullerton, 2016).

Laws protecting against genetic discrimination differ widely between countries. In the United States, the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA, 2008) stops insurers and employers from misusing genetic data, but it does not cover life, disability, or long-term care insurance (Koenig et al., 2014). In contrast, the European Union's General Data Protection

Regulation (GDPR, 2016) treats genetic information as highly sensitive, requiring strict consent and extra protections. However, enforcement is inconsistent, and sharing data across borders makes regulation more difficult.

2.3 Cloning: Reproductive and Therapeutic

The cloning of Dolly the sheep in 1996 sparked ongoing public and scholarly debate about the ethics of human cloning. It's important to differentiate between reproductive cloning, which creates genetically identical individuals for the purpose of reproduction, and therapeutic cloning, which produces cloned embryos to generate patient-specific stem cells for medical treatments. While most countries prohibit or lack clear regulations on reproductive cloning, therapeutic cloning continues to be a topic of ethical controversy (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2017).

Critics of therapeutic cloning—including many religious groups and supporters of Kantian ethics—argue that creating embryos exclusively for research purposes treats human life as a means to an end from its earliest phase (Doerflinger, 2010). On the other hand, supporters claim that early embryos do not have characteristics such as sentience, relationships, or independent development, which are necessary for full moral status (Warren, 1973). The question of the embryo's moral status remains highly debated in bioethics, with no clear agreement.

2.4 Stem Cell Research

Embryonic stem cells (ESCs), obtained from leftover IVF embryos, are pluripotent, meaning they can develop into almost any type of cell. This quality gives them great promise for treating diseases like Parkinson's, spinal cord injuries, and type 1 diabetes, leading to significant research

and investment (Thomson et al., 1998). However, because ESC research involves destroying human embryos, it remains ethically controversial.

The development of induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs) by Takahashi and Yamanaka (2006) provided a partial ethical solution. iPSCs are made by reprogramming adult cells to behave like pluripotent stem cells, eliminating the need to destroy embryos. While iPSC technology is seen as an ethical milestone (Lo & Parham, 2009), there are still concerns about genetic instability, the risk of tumors, and the ongoing need for ESC research as a standard for comparison.

2.5 Gene Editing and CRISPR-Cas9

CRISPR-Cas9, developed from bacterial immune mechanisms by Doudna and Charpentier (2012), represents a revolutionary advance in precision gene editing. Its relative simplicity, low cost, and versatility have catalysed applications ranging from correcting monogenic disease mutations to engineering disease-resistant crops. Therapeutically, somatic cell gene editing—altering genes in non-reproductive cells—has shown promise in clinical trials for sickle cell disease and beta-thalassemia (Frangoul et al., 2021).

Germline editing—modifying genes in embryos, eggs, or sperm, resulting in heritable changes—represents an ethically categorically different intervention. The 2018 announcement by Chinese scientist He Jiankui that he had created the first gene-edited human babies, with CCR5 gene modifications intended to confer HIV resistance, provoked near-universal condemnation from the scientific and bioethical communities (Liang et al., 2019). The case highlighted the insufficiency of existing governance frameworks to prevent rogue experimentation and catalysed calls for an international moratorium on heritable genome editing (Lander et al., 2019).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This paper employs a qualitative, systematic literature review methodology, consistent with the interpretive paradigm appropriate to normative and applied ethics inquiry. The research design prioritises conceptual rigour, theoretical comprehensiveness, and policy relevance over statistical generalisation. As Greenhalgh et al. (2018) note, qualitative synthesis is well-suited to investigating complex socio-ethical questions where quantification would distort rather than illuminate the phenomena under study.

3.2 Search Strategy and Source Selection

A structured search of the following databases was conducted: PubMed/MEDLINE, Scopus, PhilPapers, Google Scholar, and the WHO Institutional Repository for Information Sharing (IRIS). Search terms included combinations of: 'bioethics', 'gene editing', 'CRISPR ethics', 'stem cell research ethics', 'genetic testing privacy', 'human cloning ethics', 'informed consent biotechnology', 'ethics committees', 'regulatory frameworks biomedical', and 'germline editing governance'. Sources were limited to peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional reports, international legal instruments, and seminal books published between 2000 and 2025, with the exception of foundational texts predating this range.

Inclusion criteria required that sources: (i) engage directly with at least one of the four biotechnological domains under examination; (ii) offer substantive ethical, legal, or policy analysis; and (iii) be available in English. Exclusion criteria eliminated sources that were purely

technical without ethical engagement, opinion pieces without scholarly grounding, or sources with manifest conflicts of interest undisclosed by authors.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The analytical framework integrates three lenses: (i) ethical theory analysis, mapping arguments onto the theoretical frameworks described in Section 2; (ii) regulatory analysis, examining how legal and institutional instruments operationalise ethical values; and (iii) case study analysis, using landmark events—the Tuskegee Study, Dolly the sheep, the He Jiankui case, and the FDA approval of Casgevy—as empirical anchors for normative reasoning.

Thematic synthesis was employed to identify convergent and divergent ethical concerns across domains. Recurring themes—including the tension between innovation and precaution, the adequacy of consent frameworks, and the global equity implications of biotechnological access—were identified through iterative reading and cross-referencing. The analysis is presented in Section 4 (Findings) and critically evaluated in Section 5 (Discussion).

3.4 Limitation

This study has several limitations. The literature review, though systematic, is not exhaustive; new relevant work may have been published after the search was completed due to the fast-changing nature of biotechnology. The analysis is mostly from a Western liberal philosophical perspective, which might not fully capture non-Western bioethical viewpoints. Future research should consider cross-cultural comparisons and include firsthand data from ethics committee professionals.

4. Findings

4.1 Genetic Testing: Ethical Fault Lines

The widespread use of genetic testing has raised several interconnected ethical issues. First, privacy and data security are major concerns. Genetic data is highly personal, unchangeable, and can reveal information about entire families—a positive test for a genetic condition can affect the tested person as well as their biological relatives (Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues, 2012). Commercial genetic databases are attractive targets for hackers, as shown by the 2023 23andMe data breach, which impacted around 6.9 million users. Additionally, when genetic data is used by law enforcement, insurance companies, or employers, it raises serious worries about the misuse of this information and possible discrimination.

Second, informed consent for genetic testing is often lacking in quality. Research by Bunnik et al. (2013) found that direct-to-consumer genetic test consent forms are usually lengthy, full of legal jargon, and difficult for most people to understand. True informed consent requires more than just providing information—it means ensuring that people genuinely grasp the probabilistic nature of genetic risk, the current limitations of genetics, and the possible consequences for both insurance and family relationships.

Third, there is the problem of incidental findings—when genetic tests uncover clinically important information unrelated to the original reason for testing. The American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ACMG, 2021) recommends that certain secondary findings be reported to patients even if they didn't ask for them. However, critics argue this approach can conflict with a patient's right not to know, a principle recognized as part of autonomy under the Council of Europe's Oviedo Convention (1997)

4.2 Cloning: The Reproductive-Therapeutic Divide

Reproductive human cloning has achieved near-universal legal prohibition, reflecting a strong international consensus grounded in human dignity norms. The United Nations Declaration on Human Cloning (2005) called upon member states to prohibit all forms of human cloning incompatible with human dignity and the protection of human life. However, the non-binding nature of the Declaration and the abstention of numerous member states underscore the fragility of this consensus.

Therapeutic cloning through somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT) occupies a more contested regulatory space. The United Kingdom's Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act (1990, amended 2008) permits therapeutic cloning under licence, subject to independent HFEA oversight. By contrast, Germany's Embryo Protection Act (1990) prohibits any research involving embryo destruction. The United States lacks a federal statutory position, with policy shifting between administrations through executive orders rather than legislation.

These jurisdictional divergences create a phenomenon of 'ethics tourism'—researchers relocating work to more permissive jurisdictions to evade restrictive national regulations (Zarzechny & Caulfield, 2009). This regulatory arbitrage undermines the protective intent of more stringent regimes and argues for greater international regulatory harmonisation.

4.3 Stem Cell Research: Scientific Promise and Ethical Controversy

Embryonic stem cell research has produced landmark advances in understanding cellular differentiation, disease modelling, and drug discovery. Clinical trials of ESC-derived therapies for macular degeneration and spinal cord injury have shown early promise (Schwartz et al., 2012). However, ethical opposition from religious and pro-life constituencies has materially

affected public funding in several jurisdictions, most notably the United States during the Bush administration (2001–2009), when federal funding was restricted to existing cell lines.

The development of iPSC technology appeared to offer an ethically neutral pathway, yet subsequent research has revealed that iPSCs are not functionally equivalent to ESCs in all respects. Epigenetic memory, reduced efficiency of differentiation, and immunogenicity concerns mean that ESC research retains independent scientific value (Kim et al., 2010). This finding complicates simplified assertions that iPSCs have rendered ESC research unnecessary.

The emergence of organoid technology—three-dimensional tissue models grown from stem cells—introduces new ethical questions. Brain organoids that exhibit spontaneous neural activity raise questions about the moral status of laboratory-grown neural tissue and the point at which in vitro brain tissue might acquire morally relevant experiences (Lavazza & Massimini, 2018). The field currently lacks specific regulatory guidance on organoid research, representing an emerging governance gap.

4.4 Gene Editing: From Somatic Therapy to Germline Governance

Somatic gene editing has quickly moved from experimental research to real-world medical treatments. In November 2023, the UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) approved Casgevy—a CRISPR-based therapy developed by Vertex Pharmaceuticals and CRISPR Therapeutics—for treating sickle cell disease and beta-thalassemia (MHRA, 2023). This approval represents a major milestone and reflects years of ethical and regulatory work in the field of somatic gene editing.

However, editing genes in the human germline remains highly controversial. The 2018 case involving He Jiankui highlighted major lapses in ethical oversight. He carried out his

experiments without proper institutional review, kept his work secret from regulators, and put embryos—and the children born from them—at unknown safety risks for a non-medical purpose (the targeted CCR5 mutation does not reliably protect against HIV and may cause other health problems). He was later convicted in China and sentenced to three years in prison.

The International Commission on the Clinical Use of Human Germline Genome Editing, formed by the National Academies, the Royal Society, and others, concluded in 2020 that editing the human germline should not be done clinically unless: (i) it is proven safe and effective, (ii) strong regulatory systems are in place, and (iii) there is broad agreement in society (NASSEM, 2020). So far, no country has fulfilled all these requirements.

4.5 The Role of Ethics Committees

Institutional review boards (IRBs) and research ethics committees (RECs) serve as the primary institutional mechanisms for protecting research participants and ensuring ethical oversight of biomedical research. The literature identifies persistent structural weaknesses in these bodies. Emanuel et al. (2004) documented IRB dysfunction in the United States, including inconsistent standards across institutions, under-resourced committees with excessive workloads, and regulatory frameworks emphasising procedural compliance over substantive ethical deliberation.

International comparisons reveal significant variation in ethics committee composition, independence, and authority. In many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), RECs are under-resourced, lack trained members with relevant bioethical expertise, and may be susceptible to institutional or governmental pressure (Nyika et al., 2009). This disparity is ethically significant given the substantial volume of clinical research conducted in LMICs by high-income

country sponsors—a practice with a troubling historical association with exploitative research designs (Benatar & Singer, 2000).

5. Discussion

5.1 Human Dignity as a Foundational Value

In all four areas of biotechnology discussed, human dignity stands out as the core value driving ethical debates. The idea of human dignity, rooted in Kantian philosophy and reflected in international documents like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948) and the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights (2005), serves both as a guiding principle and a common reference point. However, its exact meaning is often debated: arguments based on dignity are used to both oppose reproductive cloning (arguing that it treats children as objects) and to advocate for access to genetic treatments (suggesting that withholding care undermines the dignity of patients).

This analysis indicates that dignity should not be treated as a stand-alone or self-evident principle. Instead, it must be defined through careful discussion that considers all stakeholders. Additionally, reasoning based on dignity should be balanced with consideration of actual consequences, aligning with the pluralistic approach of Beauchamp and Childress's (2019) principlism.

5.2 Informed Consent: Adequacy and Evolution

The doctrine of informed consent, traditionally operationalised through written consent forms and disclosure requirements, is straining under the weight of biotechnological complexity. In genetic testing, the recursive and probabilistic nature of genetic risk information makes standard consent procedures inadequate. In genomic research, the re-identification risks associated with supposedly anonymised datasets challenge the adequacy of one-time consent obtained years before data repurposing (Gymrek et al., 2013).

Dynamic consent models—enabling ongoing, granular participant control over data uses—have been proposed as a more robust approach (Kaye et al., 2015). Pilot implementations in biobank

research have demonstrated feasibility, though concerns persist about digital access inequities and the cognitive burden imposed on participants. Regulatory bodies must move beyond prescriptive consent form requirements toward outcome-oriented standards focused on genuine participant understanding and agency.

5.3 Safety, Precaution, and the Limits of Innovation

The precautionary principle—commonly expressed as: when an action raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause-and-effect relationships are not fully established scientifically—is widely invoked in biotechnology governance (European Commission, 2000). Its application to gene editing illustrates tensions between precaution and access to potentially life-saving therapies.

For somatic gene editing therapies such as Casgevy, the precautionary principle has been operationalised through phased clinical trials, long-term follow-up requirements, and condition-specific approval. This incremental approach reflects appropriate epistemic humility about long-term safety. For germline editing, however, the relevant harms extend across generations and affect individuals who cannot consent—future persons. This consideration supports a more categorical precautionary stance, consistent with the position of the International Commission (NASEM, 2020).

Critics of precautionary reasoning argue that excessive caution itself has costs: delayed access to effective therapies, perpetuation of suffering from treatable diseases, and the displacement of research to less regulated jurisdictions. A calibrated precautionary approach must weigh risks of action against risks of inaction, while maintaining clear categorical prohibitions on interventions with irreversible cross-generational effects.

5.4 Justice, Equity, and Global Access

The justice implications of biotechnology are profound and underexplored in mainstream bioethical discourse. Advanced genomic therapies are extraordinarily expensive: Casgevy was priced at approximately \$2.2 million per patient in the United States (Vertex Pharmaceuticals, 2023). At this price point, transformative gene therapies are accessible only to patients in wealthy countries with robust health insurance systems or public reimbursement schemes. The majority of patients globally—including the majority of sickle cell disease sufferers, who are predominantly of African and Middle Eastern descent—are effectively excluded.

This exclusion raises fundamental justice concerns under both Rawlsian and capabilities frameworks. Rawls's difference principle demands that social and economic inequalities be arranged to benefit the least advantaged members of society (Rawls, 1971). Applied to biotechnology, this principle would support tiered pricing, compulsory licensing, and technology transfer mechanisms that expand access to life-saving innovations. Nussbaum's capabilities approach similarly demands that societies enable all persons to achieve threshold levels of central human capabilities, including bodily health (Nussbaum, 2011).

5.5 Strengthening Ethics Committees and Regulatory Frameworks

The case of He Jiankui illustrates that the ethical oversight infrastructure for biomedical research has significant gaps at both national and international levels. Three reform priorities emerge from the analysis. First, international regulatory harmonisation must be deepened. The current patchwork of national regulations, varying widely in scope and stringency, creates arbitrage opportunities that undermine ethical protections globally. The WHO Expert Advisory Committee

on Developing Global Standards for Governance and Oversight of Human Genome Editing (2021) has called for a global registry of clinical trials involving human genome editing as a transparency and accountability mechanism.

Second, ethics committees must be structurally strengthened. This requires adequate resourcing, mandatory bioethics training for committee members, clear criteria for membership independence, and regular external audit. The CIOMS International Ethical Guidelines for Health-related Research Involving Humans (2016) provide a useful template for capacity-building in LMICs, but implementation requires sustained international investment.

Third, public and community engagement must be embedded in governance processes. Deliberative democracy approaches—including citizens' juries, consensus conferences, and participatory technology assessment—have demonstrated capacity to generate nuanced, legitimate public input on complex biotechnology policy questions (Dryzek et al., 2020). The alternative—technocratic governance by expert committees insulated from public accountability—risks producing decisions that lack democratic legitimacy and social trust.

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined the major bioethical challenges arising from four biotechnological domains—genetic testing, cloning, stem cell research, and gene editing—through the lens of established ethical theories and contemporary regulatory frameworks. The analysis demonstrates that biotechnological progress, while offering profound therapeutic possibilities, generates equally profound ethical demands that cannot be addressed by scientific or regulatory communities in isolation.

Several overarching conclusions emerge. First, human dignity must serve as the non-negotiable foundation of biotechnology governance, interpreted not as a rhetorical absolute but as a substantive constraint on the instrumentalisation of human life and the imposition of irreversible harms on non-consenting future persons. Second, informed consent frameworks require fundamental renovation to address the complexity, probabilism, and data-sharing dynamics of modern genomic research. Dynamic consent models offer a promising direction. Third, safety regulation must be proportionate to the reversibility of interventions: somatic therapies warrant rigorous but enabling regulation, while germline modification demands a categorical moratorium pending the development of adequate safety evidence and governance infrastructure.

Fourth, justice considerations demand that biotechnological benefits not be confined to affluent populations. International mechanisms for technology transfer, tiered pricing, and equitable research participation are ethical imperatives, not optional policy choices. Fifth, ethics committees must be adequately resourced, genuinely independent, and globally networked to prevent regulatory arbitrage and protect research participants worldwide. The path to responsible biotechnological innovation is demanding but not impassable. It requires sustained, principled

dialogue among scientists, ethicists, regulators, communities, and civil society organisations. It requires institutional reforms that are ambitious yet politically feasible. And it requires, above all, a commitment to the proposition that the measure of a civilisation is not the sophistication of its technologies but the depth of its ethical commitments.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Key International Regulatory Instruments in Biomedical Ethics

The following instruments provide the primary international normative framework for biomedical ethics governance:

- Nuremberg Code (1947) — Established voluntary informed consent as an absolute requirement for human experimentation.
- Declaration of Helsinki (WMA, 1964; revised 2013) — Defines ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects, including obligations regarding vulnerable populations.
- Belmont Report (1979, USA) — Articulated principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice for federally funded research.
- Oviedo Convention (Council of Europe, 1997) — The first binding international instrument covering bioethics broadly; addresses genetic testing, transplantation, and scientific research.
- UN Declaration on Human Cloning (2005) — Non-binding call on member states to prohibit human cloning incompatible with human dignity.
- UNESCO Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights (2005) — Affirms human dignity, autonomy, and justice as foundations of global bioethics.
- GDPR (EU, 2016) — Classifies genetic and health data as special categories requiring heightened protection.

- WHO Recommendations on Human Genome Editing (2021) — Calls for a global registry and governance standards for genome editing research.

Appendix B: Summary of Major Case Studies Referenced

Table B1 summarises the five major case studies referenced throughout this paper, highlighting the primary ethical breach and the regulatory or policy response generated.

Case Study 1 — Tuskegee Syphilis Study (1932–1972): U.S. Public Health Service withheld penicillin treatment from 399 Black men with syphilis without informed consent. Triggered the Belmont Report (1979) and the National Research Act (1974).

Case Study 2 — Dolly the Sheep (1996): First mammal cloned from an adult somatic cell by Ian Wilmut at the Roslin Institute. Catalysed global legislative responses prohibiting reproductive human cloning and extensive public debate about therapeutic cloning.

Case Study 3 — He Jiankui Gene-Edited Babies (2018): Chinese researcher created twin girls with CCR5 gene deletions without adequate ethics review or safety justification. Led to international calls for a germline editing moratorium and He's criminal conviction.

Case Study 4 — 23andMe Data Breach (2023): Genetic data of approximately 6.9 million users compromised, exposing risks of commercial genetic database aggregation and inadequacy of existing data protection enforcement.

Case Study 5 — Casgevy Approval (MHRA, 2023): First regulatory approval of a CRISPR-based therapy for haemoglobinopathies. Demonstrates the maturation of somatic gene editing and the capacity of regulatory frameworks to enable beneficial innovation responsibly.

Appendix C: Recommended Ethical Guidelines for Responsible Biotechnology

Based on the analysis in this paper, the following guidelines are recommended for adoption by biomedical research institutions, ethics committees, and regulatory bodies:

1. Establish clear categorical prohibitions on heritable germline editing pending international scientific consensus and governance infrastructure.
2. Implement dynamic consent platforms for all genomic research involving secondary data use.
3. Mandate independent, adequately resourced research ethics committees with rotating lay and community membership.
4. Develop tiered pricing and technology transfer mechanisms to ensure equitable global access to approved gene therapies.
5. Create a WHO-administered global registry for all human genome editing clinical trials.
6. Require mandatory bioethics education for all biomedical researchers as a condition of institutional affiliation and grant funding.
7. Establish cross-national recognition of ethics committee approvals to reduce administrative duplication while maintaining standards.

8. Invest in LMIC ethics committee capacity-building through international partnership programmes.
9. Embed deliberative public engagement in all major biotechnology governance decisions.
10. Review and update regulatory frameworks on a five-year cycle to keep pace with technological developments.