

Genetic pitfalls

Sir, Matt Ridley presents genetic engineering as if it were good for everyone ("Smile! Genetic engineering is good for you", Opinion, Sept 7).

Most of the examples he quotes have been of benefit, one way or another, but the problem with germ-line genetic engineering, which is now being discussed, is that it is not just a slippery slope but a step change in medical ethics.

Alterations wrought on germ cells will be passed on, for good or ill, to future generations — who cannot, of course, have given their prior consent

— and once introduced are effectively irreversible.

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