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**Rewriting the human genome,  
rewriting human rights law? Human  
rights, human dignity and human  
germline editing in the CRISPR era**

**Thursday, March 12, 2020, 12:30 - 2:00 Falconer  
Hall, Solarium (Room FA2), 84 Queen's Park**

In most legal orders, heritable genome editing is either prohibited or severely restricted. A recurring thought in these legal frameworks is that heritable genome editing would result in practices that are at odds with principles of human rights, such as dignity, justice and equality. However, now that CRISPR is bringing human germline editing within human reach, the question has risen as to whether these human rights bans still make sense. The call is growing louder to lift the ban on reproductive genome editing for therapeutic purposes as soon as the technology is safe for introduction in the clinic. This article critically examines these recent proposals from a human rights perspective. First, it examines the question as to how realistic the proposed distinction between therapeutic and non-therapeutic uses of human germline editing is in the CRISPR era. Second, it argues that these proposals rely on a one-dimensional understanding of the meaning of human rights for this issue. Finally, it suggests that this one-dimensional understanding paves the way for a regime of self-regulation by the scientific community that leaves little room for public debate on the question as to whether or how human germline editing fits in the long-term aspirations of society.

Britta van Beers is Professor of Law, Ethics and Biotechnology at the Department of Legal Theory of the Faculty of Law of the VU University, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. In her research and teaching she explores the legal-philosophical aspects of the regulation and governance of biomedical technologies. One of the main themes in her research concerns the legal and legal-philosophical meaning of concepts such as person, humanity and dignity. In recent work, she has focused on issues related to personalized medicine and human gene editing. Her publications include the co-edited volumes *Personalised Medicine, Individual Choice and the Common Good*; *Symbolic Legislation and Developments in Biolaw*; and *Humanity across International Law and Biolaw*.

A light lunch will be served.

For accommodation purposes, please avoid scented products when participating in the seminar

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