

SPOTTED

# Spotted: CRISPR clash; looking for love

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17 APRIL 2015

WEEK OF APRIL 13<sup>TH</sup>

## CRISPR clash

The **gene-editing tool CRISPR** is at the center of a patent war with potentially billions of dollars at stake. Rights to the tool, which can delete, duplicate and mutate genes in cells, currently rest with researchers at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard. But the University of California claims its scientists had a role in CRISPR's creation, and the researchers are ready to **bust out the lab notebooks** to prove it. An article published 15 April by the *MIT Technology Review* describes how the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office could decide **who walks away with the patent** for this biotech breakthrough.

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## Trial transparency

The World Health Organization (WHO) wants researchers to **release the results of clinical trials** within a year of the trial's completion, regardless of whether the results were positive. The agency announced its new position 14 April, describing the "ethical imperative to report the results of all clinical trials, including those of unreported trials conducted in the past." In an editorial in *PLoS Medicine*, WHO scientists say the move is critical, as **withholding results** may subject future study participants to unnecessary risk.

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## Looking for love

Two new documentaries offer a glimpse at the challenges of people with autism in search of that special someone. "**Autism in Love**," which premiered this week at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City, follows three people with autism on their quest for romance. "**Aspie Seeks Love**," which showed this week at the Kansas City Film Fest, focuses on a 40-year-old man with Asperger syndrome posting witty personal ads looking for a mate. The films capture the **special struggles**

for lovers on the spectrum, according to a review published 14 April by *The Daily Beast*. “Our experiences, our desire to feel love are just as genuine, if not more intense, than anyone else’s,” Lindsey, who is featured in “Autism in Love,” told *The Daily Beast*.

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## Placebo plunge

The **placebo effect** continues to plague clinical trials in autism and beyond. Researchers are searching for the origins of this fickle force. An editorial published this week in *Trends in Molecular Medicine* outlines the first **steps toward a ‘placebome’** — a map of the genes that give rise to the placebo effect. The effort could help tease out why some people respond just as well to a sugar pill as they do to a drug.

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