

- Genetics / Technology

Gene-editing stops virus transmission within human body

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PARIS/BEIJING: Scientists have used CRISPR gene-editing technology to successfully block the transmission of the Sars-cov-2 virus in infected human cells, according to research released on Tuesday that could pave the way for Covid-19 treatment.

Writing in the journal Nature Communications, researchers in Australia said the tool was effective against viral transmissions in laboratory tests, adding that they were hoping to begin animal trials soon.

CRISPR, which allows scientists to alter DNA sequences and modify gene function, has already shown promise in eliminating the genetic coding that drives the development of cancer among children.

The team in Tuesday's study used an enzyme, CRISPR-CAS13B, that binds to relevant RNA sequences on the coronavirus and degrades the genome it needs to replicate inside human cells. Lead author Sharon Lewin from Australia's Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity said the team designed the CRISPR tool to recognise Sars-cov-2. "Once the virus is recognised, the CRISPR enzyme is activated and chops up the virus," she said.

Face recognition tech fights Covid in China

Facial recognition tech linked to personal health codes has been rolled out in the Chinese city of Ruili bordering Myanmar as authorities seek to squash a Covid-19 outbreak.

This is the first publicly reported instance in China of facial recognition being used to track a person's movements and health status as they enter and exit residential areas, supermarkets, transport hubs and other public places.