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Did 'Catastrophic Accident' Start COVID-19?

Analysis by Dr. Joseph Mercola Fact Checked | July 01, 2022

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- According to a "senior European politician," World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus confided to him in private that he believes COVID-19 was the result of a catastrophic accident at the Wuhan Institute of Virology in Wuhan, China
- In late 2020, the WHO established a scientific advisory group to investigate the origin of SARS-CoV-2. This highly compromised group concluded there was nothing to the lab leak theory and that it would no longer be investigated
- After sharp criticism, the WHO agreed to set up another investigative committee. The Scientific Advisory Group for the Origins of Novel Pathogens (SAGO) released its first preliminary report June 9, 2022
- According to SAGO, the lab leak theory is unlikely and it too insists the "strongest evidence" points to zoonotic spillover. This despite the fact that none of the three basic pieces of data that would support zoonotic origin have been identified
- HERV-K102 — a human replication-competent endogenous retrovirus that protects against viruses — is a crucial defense mechanism against severe COVID-19. SARS-CoV-2 has several mechanisms for targeting HERV-K102, and this strongly supports the lab-leak hypothesis
- The selection of these traits could not have occurred in animals, as only humans have HERV-K102. The only way to give a bat-related coronavirus the ability to inhibit HERV-K102 would be by passaging the virus through humanized mice, and we know that's been done

According to a "senior European politician," World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus confided to him in private that he believes COVID-19 was the result of a catastrophic accident at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) in Wuhan, China.[1,2] Publicly, in a June 14, 2022, press conference, Ghebreyesus stated:[3]

> *"We do not yet have the answers as to where it came from or how it entered the human population. Understanding the origins of the virus is very important scientifically to prevent future epidemics and pandemics.*
>
> *But morally, we also owe it to all those who have suffered and died and their families. The longer it takes, the harder it becomes. We need to speed up and act with a sense of urgency.*
>
> *All hypotheses must remain on the table until we have evidence that enables us to rule certain hypotheses in or out. This makes it all the more urgent that this scientific work be kept separate from politics.*
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> *The way to prevent politicization is for countries to share data and samples with transparency and without interference from any government. The only way this scientific work can progress successfully is with full collaboration from all countries, including China, where the first cases of SARS-CoV-2 were reported."*

The WHO Was Quick to Dismiss Lab Leak Claims

As you may recall, in the latter part of 2020, the WHO established a scientific advisory group to investigate the origin of SARS-CoV-2, which just so happened to include individuals who weren't exactly impartial. That's not surprising, considering China was allowed to hand pick the team.

Among those selected was Peter Daszak,[4] Ph.D., president of EcoHealth Alliance, who has close professional ties to the WIV and who had already gone on record dismissing the lab-origin theory as "pure baloney."[5]

He was also the mastermind behind the publication of a group of scientists' statement condemning such inquiries as "conspiracy theory."[6,7] Daszak's "scientific consensus" was then relied on by the media to "debunk" theories and evidence showing the pandemic virus most likely originated from a laboratory.

February 9, 2021, this task force declared the WIV and two other biosafety level 4 laboratories in Wuhan had nothing to do with the COVID-19 outbreak, and that the lab-escape theory would no longer be part of the investigation.[8,9,10] With that, the WHO declared its China investigation completed, and said it would consider expanding the scope of the investigation to look into other sources, such as imported frozen fish from overseas.

It was only after 14 nations criticized the findings as heavily compromised that Ghebreyesus relented, admitting there were flaws in the report, and ordered a new investigation. A preliminary report[11] from this new group, the Scientific Advisory Group for the Origins of Novel Pathogens (SAGO), was released June 9, 2022. In the featured video, Dr. John Campbell reviews the findings in this report.

Saga Continues With SAGO

"I don't know whether to laugh or cry, really" Campbell says after introducing the SAGO report — a prelude that tips us off that this report, as previous ones, leaves a lot to be desired. In summary, while SAGO doesn't dismiss the lab leak theory completely, it still considers it unlikely, and doubles down on the natural zoonotic spillover theory.

While Ghebreyesus did send two letters to Chinese authorities requesting more information that might help evaluate the lab leak theory, SAGO was not provided with any such material, so one wonders what they used to reach the conclusion that it's unlikely.

SAGO does discuss the very real possibility of lab escapes, noting it has happened before, and states there's a need to identify a) gain of function research in which

pathogens are made deadlier, and b) dual use research of concern, meaning research on pathogens that can be used for both defensive and offensive purposes.

As explained by Campbell, a virus might be studied to understand a disease or create a vaccine, but the findings could also be put to use in the creation of a bioweapon, for example.

Questions Remain Around US Funding

Campbell also points out that the National Institutes of Health in the U.S. canceled funding for bat coronavirus research at the WIV in April 2020, so it's clear the NIH had in fact funded such research. What's not clear is whether the NIH has released everything related to this research.

As discussed by investigative journalist Paul Thacker in a June 21, 2022, Substack article,[12] the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) has also been "less than candid" about its funding to the EcoHealth Alliance, and by extension, the WIV.

We know that Daszak submitted a grant proposal to DARPA in 2018 to collect and study bat viruses in China with the intent to create chimeras with increased transmissibility and/or virulence. DARPA officially rejected the proposal, noting that since it involved gain of function, a risk mitigation plan would have to be included were it to be funded in the future.

DARPA has publicly denied ever funding the EcoHealth Alliance, either directly or indirectly, but internal documents obtained from a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the University of California at Davis suggests otherwise. As reported by Thacker:[13]

> *"Around the same time that EcoHealth Alliance (EHA) submitted their proposal to DARPA in 2018, UC Davis researchers were discussing a pandemic preparedness program they run and the year-five budgets for their partners including EHA [EcoHealth Alliance], Metabiota, and the Smithsonian Institution ...*

UC Davis's Elizabeth Leasure ... wrote that a DARPA award would start up in October. Ms. Leasure then added, 'Some current staff/other costs will be moved to DARPA once the subaward is in place ...'

In an email responding to Ms. Leasure, UC Davis researcher Jonna Mazet wrote that the primary cause for the increase in EHA's budget was personnel costs, adding that Peter Daszak's 'compensation increased by 24% from last year.'

Desptite emails showing UC Davis researchers paid EcoHealth Allliance with DARPA monies, the research agency has their story and they're sticking to it ... These latest revelations add to a growing body of evidence that the Biden Administration is not interested in reviewing activities by the EcoHealth Alliance."

Genetic Overlap Is Too Small to Suggest Zoonotic Origin

According to SAGO, genetic sequencing suggests the ancestral strains of SARS-CoV-2 are of zoonotic origin. The closest genetically-related viruses, beta coronaviruses, have been identified in Rhinolophus bats. The closest genetic overlaps are with a bat virus collected in China in 2013 (96.1%) and a bat virus collected in Laos in 2020 (96.8%).

Based on those genetic overlaps, SAGO concludes (at least preliminarily) that the strongest evidence points to a zoonotic spillover event. "But does that stand up to scientific scrutiny?" Campbell asks, adding that this, in and of itself, is not actually scientific evidence for zoonotic spillover.

For comparison, consider the genetic overlap between humans and chimps is 98.9%, yet notice how different we are. Even tiny genetic variations create huge differences. The overlap between one human and another is 99.9%, so while our genetic makeup is very, very close to identical, large dissimilarities in looks, behavior and disposition are noticeable.

Humans and bananas, meanwhile, share about 60% of their genetic code, yet you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone who thinks there are any similarities whatsoever between

the two. All of that is to say that overlaps in the 96% range simply aren't anywhere near close enough to suggest SARS-CoV-2 came from bats.

> *"It's nothing like enough, yet they say this is the strongest possible evidence. Why would a scientific group say that?"* Campbell asks.

As evidence for his comments, Campbell points out that SAGO chairwoman, professor Marietjie Venter, has previously stated that "the precursor viruses that have been identified in bats are definitely not close enough to be the virus that spilled over into humans."

And, while SAGO claims the strongest evidence points to zoonotic spillover, they admit that neither the virus progenitors, nor the natural or intermediate hosts, or the actual spillover event to humans, have been identified. Basically, most of the basic evidences are still missing to explain this pandemic as the result of zoonotic spillover.

It's even a clear contradiction to, on the one hand, claim Rhinolophus bat viruses are the most likely source, and on the other admit that the virus progenitors (the ancestors of the virus) have not been identified. In conclusion, none of the three pieces of evidence that would help prove zoonotic spillover have been found, so concluding zoonotic origin is rather illogical.

New Information Pointing Toward Lab Leak

While Campbell says we don't have any direct evidence for SARS-CoV-2 being a manmade lab creation either, I've published many articles over the past two and a half years in which I review data suggesting just that. If you're a paid subscriber to my Substack, you can search through the archives there.

One piece of evidence we've not covered before comes from Canadian scientist Marian Laderoute. In mid-June 2022, she submitted for publication a scientific review titled, "Trained Immunity Involving HERV-K102 Activation May Promote Recovery From COVID-19 Providing a New Vaccination Paradigm Against Pandemic RNA Viruses."

At the time of this writing, the paper is only available on her Substack.[14] According to Laderoute, details surrounding HERV-K102 activation may be relevant to the search for SARS-CoV-2's origin. She notes:[15]

> *"[It] seems quite plausible that the original Wuhan strain had already undergone selection by the human immune system prior to its inadvertent 'accidental' release in fall of 2019. This conclusion was also reached by as early as May 2020 based on the sequencing of SARS-CoV-2 compared with SARS-CoV-1 over the first few months of spread in humans.*
>
> *This new review provides the rationale to suggest in contrast to the first report of SAGO released June 9, 2022, that the lab-leak hypothesis is instead, the most likely source of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic virus."*

According to Laderoute, HERV-K102 — a human replication-competent endogenous retrovirus that protects against viruses and plays a role in several chronic diseases[16] — is a crucial defense mechanism against severe COVID-19. HERV-K102-trained immunity is basically part of your innate immunity.

Previous research[17] has shown HERV-K102 also helps defend against HIV-AIDS, by providing an early protective innate immune response against replication of the HIV-1 virus.

> **"Only humans have HERV-K102, so the only way to give a bat-related coronavirus the ability to inhibit HERV-K102 would be by passaging the virus through humanized mice, and we know that's been done."**

Laderoute points out SARS-CoV-2 has built in several mechanisms for targeting HERV-K102 particle production and release, and this, she insists, not only validates that HERV-K102 defends against severe COVID infection but also "strongly supports the lab-leak hypothesis."

Why? Because selection of these particular traits "could not have occurred in animals, as only humans have the endogenous retrovirus K102 (HERV-K102) protector foamy virus," she says. Since this endogenous retrovirus exists only in humans, the only way to give a bat-related coronavirus the ability to inhibit HERV-K102 would be by passaging the virus through humanized mice, and we know that's been done.

One such experiment was published in October 2019.[18] One of the authors was virologist Ralph Baric, Ph.D., who also happens to have links to the WIV and its gain of function research on coronaviruses.[19]

Laderoute also explains why and how HERV-K102 must first clear the SARS-CoV-2 virus before the adaptive arm of your immune system can produce neutralizing antibodies. When HERV-K102 is impaired, this doesn't happen, neutralizing antibodies are not produced and the infection rages out of control until it kills the host. Put another way, it appears SARS-CoV-2 is made in such a way as to inhibit innate immunity first, which inhibits adaptive immunity second.

She goes into many other details in her paper as well, but suffice it to say, this unique feature — the inhibition of HERV-K102, which only exists in humans — does appear to support the theory that SARS-CoV-2 was created by scientists and somehow got out.

New Frankenstein Experiments Underway

As if that weren't bad enough, we now have evidence showing scientists are splicing together the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein — the most toxic, diseases-causing part — with proteins from HIV-1, the virus that contributes to AIDS (along with other coinfections).

In a June 20, 2022, Twitter post,[20] Jikkyleaks linked to a recent patent,[21] filed April 7, 2022, for a "Non-integrating HIV-1 comprising mutant RT/IN proteins and the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein." What could possibly go wrong? If COVID-19 is any indication, just about everything.

> *"Do you see why the whole of virology needs to be shut down?"* Jikkyleaks writes.[22] *"These psychopaths are making more HIV-1 with SARS-CoV-2 in labs,*

and they want you to be thankful to them.”

If we want to prevent another pandemic such as the one the whole world has now suffered through, the key goal should be to demand a ban on all gain of function research and dual use research.

The justification that we “need” this kind of research to “stay ahead” of natural mutations is nothing but a ruse. Most outbreaks of novel viruses have been the result of lab leaks. They were not natural. We don’t actually need this kind of research. It’s almost all risk and very little potential benefit.