

## **Origin of COVID-19: The biggest cover up in medical history**

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When the COVID-19 pandemic spread all over the world in early 2020, the Chinese government covered up its origin.<sup>1,2</sup> The Chinese cover up quickly extended to US academics with conflicts of interest, prestigious medical journals, the media, and the key advisor to the US President, Anthony Fauci.

It was an orchestrated effort to hide the obvious, which was too painful to admit, that the pandemic was highly likely caused by a lab leak in Wuhan, and that the virus, SARS-CoV-2, was highly likely manufactured at the Wuhan Institute of Virology.<sup>1</sup> In this lab, researchers take a harmless virus and make it deadly by genetic modification in so-called gain-of-function experiments.

The cover up was highly effective. It shaped the public opinion that the virus had a natural origin and had spread from animals to humans, even though not a single thread of evidence in support of this idea has ever been produced. Chinese censorship and threats against those who knew better<sup>1</sup> won the first round but the game has now been lost.

According to multiple US government officials interviewed as part of a lengthy investigation in 2023, the first three people infected by the virus and who were all admitted to hospital have now been named.<sup>3</sup> They all worked in the lab where they did gain-of-function experiments including Ben Hu who led this research. One US investigator said: “We were rock-solid confident that this was likely COVID-19 ... They’re trained biologists in their thirties and forties. Thirty-five-year-old scientists don’t get very sick with influenza.”<sup>4</sup> One of the researchers’ family members later died.

Furthermore, on 19 November 2019, the safety director of the Chinese Academy of Sciences made a visit, according to the institute’s website. He addressed a meeting of the institute’s leadership with important “oral and written” instructions from China’s president, Xi Jinping, regarding “a complex and grave situation.”<sup>4</sup>

When the Wuhan Institute put out their first paper about the pandemic virus, they failed to point out the novel furin cleavage site despite having had plans to insert this and also did insert it in SARS-like viruses in their lab. A molecular biologist from Harvard said that “It’s as if these scientists proposed putting horns on horses, but when a unicorn shows up in their city a year later, they write a paper describing every part of it except its horn.”<sup>3</sup>

### **The US role in the cover up**

China was not alone in leading the whole world astray. Newly released emails and messages reveal that US top scientists lied to Congress during a hearing in July 2023 and also lied profusely about the concerns they had in early 2020 that the pandemic might very well have been due to a lab leak of a virus manufactured with financial support from the US National Institutes of Health (NIH).<sup>5</sup>

Without any evidence, Robert Garry told Congress that the virus had emerged in nature and not from a lab. Kristian Andersen denounced Republicans for spreading a “conspiracy theory” that he and Garry had worked with Presidential advisor Anthony Fauci in early 2020 to produce disinformation about COVID’s origin in their 17 March 2020 *Nature Medicine* paper, “The proximal origin of SARS-CoV-2.”<sup>6</sup>

The authors wrote that, “Our analyses clearly show that SARS-CoV-2 is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus.” Their analyses didn’t show anything; it was just rhetoric, and a group of 14 concerned scientists documented that Andersen et al.’s arguments were logically flawed.<sup>7</sup> In my view, the article in *Nature Medicine* is fraudulent and should be retracted because one of the definitions of scientific misconduct involves deliberate distortion of the results.

The paper had an enormous influence on shaping public opinion and has been viewed nearly six million times.<sup>5</sup> When I investigated what the social medias’ so-called fact checkers said about the origin of the virus, I quickly found a fact check that called it false that someone had said that the virus had been manipulated, explaining that “experts have refuted the claim that the virus is not naturally occurring.”<sup>1</sup> The source of this refutation was the nonsense in *Nature Medicine*.

Other fact checkers were equally gullible. When one of my colleagues posted a message on Facebook about one of the best articles ever written about the origin of the pandemic, from May 2021,<sup>8</sup> his post was first labelled “Missing context,” and next it was removed.<sup>1</sup> Again, they referred to Andersen and colleagues and they used superlatives to further their case, e.g. the 27 people that signed a highly misleading *Lancet* letter (see below) were called eminent scientists.

It was not a “conspiracy theory” that Andersen had worked with Fauci and other “higher ups” when he decided to spread misinformation. It is a fact.<sup>5</sup> Pressure from “higher ups” led Andersen and Garry to abandon the lab leak theory as implausible. Moreover, the newly released documents reveal that Andersen still suspected that a lab leak of a manufactured virus was possible a month after *Nature Medicine* published their article, and two months after they published a preprint.

Their U-turn made some “higher ups” happy. On 16 April 2020, NIH Director Francis Collins emailed Fauci that he hoped the *Nature Medicine* article “would settle this ... Wondering if there is something NIH can do to help put down this very destructive conspiracy.”<sup>5</sup>

Andersen explained to Congress that his sudden change in belief in early February 2020 was based on “many factors, including additional data, analyses, learning more about coronaviruses, and discussions with colleagues and collaborators.”<sup>5</sup>

This wasn’t true. Andersen wrote on 1 February 2020: “I think the main thing still in my mind is that the lab escape version of this is so friggin’ likely to have happened because they were already doing this type of work and the molecular data is fully consistent with that scenario.” The newly released messages reveal nearly 60 clear statements between 31 January and 28 February 2020 by Andersen and his colleagues expressing their belief that a lab leak, and the bioengineering of viruses, were the origin of COVID-19.<sup>5</sup>

In early February, Andersen and his co-authors agreed that the features they observed in SARS-CoV-2 exhibited exactly the steps they would have taken if they themselves had decided to engineer an infectious SARS-like coronavirus.<sup>5</sup> A key piece of evidence that the virus was highly likely engineered is the furin cleavage site on the spike protein, which allows SARS-CoV-2 to bind to

human receptor sites, making the virus highly infectious. This is extremely unlikely to have occurred by chance, i.e. via mutations.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Andersen and his colleagues were not simply following the additional data or analyses, as he claimed in 2023 but actively sought to discredit the lab leak, conceal information, deceive journalists, and mislead the public in 2020.

On 17 April 2020, Fauci described Andersen's article at a White House press briefing without disclosing his close involvement with the production of it.<sup>5</sup> He even claimed he didn't have the authors' names, which was untruthful. For example, on 1 February, Andersen and his co-authors had a conference call with Fauci and Collins who used the opportunity to "prompt" them to write the *Nature Medicine* paper.

The cover up was so deliberate that key people, including Andersen, tried to evade public scrutiny by not using email. A top Fauci advisor boasted of evading Freedom of Information Act requests by using Gmail and hiding Fauci's role; "Tony doesn't want his fingerprints on origin stories ... Don't worry ... I will delete anything I don't want to see in the *New York Times*."<sup>5</sup>

But they were caught. On 6 February 2020, Andersen changed the name of the Slack channel from "project-wuhan engineering" to "project-wuhan pangolin. However, their attempts at making pangolins responsible for the pandemic failed totally. On 12 February, four days before the authors published their preprint, Andersen confessed on Slack: "For all I know, people could have infected the pangolin, not the other way."

In Congress in 2023, Andersen claimed he had changed his mind based on the scientific evidence that an intermediary animal host, such as a pangolin, was possible, but the internal communications show that he lied.

Andersen and his colleagues wrote in their *Nature Medicine* article that "The presence in pangolins of an RBD [receptor binding domain] very similar to that of SARS-CoV-2 means that we can infer this was also probably in the virus that jumped to humans."<sup>6</sup> But two days after the preprint publication, Andersen once again admitted, "Clearly none of these pangolin sequences was the source though." And on 20 February, Andersen emphasized that "Unfortunately the pangolins don't help clarify the story."<sup>5</sup>

On 16 April, Andersen again expressed concerns that the virus might have been produced in the Wuhan lab. However, just one week later, Edward Holmes, one of Andersen's co-authors, disparaged "lab escape conspiracy theories" on Twitter.<sup>5</sup>

There were other revelations of the authors' extreme dishonesty. In early February, a *New York Times* reporter, Don McNeil, was asking tough questions about whether COVID-19 may have come from a lab. Andersen and his co-authors deliberately planned to misinform McNeil and one of them said: "I am thinking of just replying and saying that 'I see nothing in the genome that would make me believe it has been genetically manipulated in a lab.'"<sup>5</sup>

Anthony Fauci's role was also deplorable. He visited CIA headquarters to "influence" its review of COVID-19 origins, the House Oversight Committee reported.<sup>9</sup> Seven CIA analysts with significant scientific expertise related to COVID-19 received performance bonuses after changing a report to downplay concerns about a possible lab origin of the virus. The CIA purposely did not "badge" Fauci in and out of the building so as to hide any record that he had been there.

A CIA whistleblower revealed that Fauci not only visited the CIA but also pushed the *Nature Medicine* paper, in meetings at the State Department and the White House in an effort to steer government officials away from looking into the possibility that COVID-19 escaped from a lab.

Fauci had reasons to push scientists and intelligence analysts to believe the virus had a zoonotic origin since his agency had issued a grant to fund the dangerous research in Wuhan.<sup>1</sup>

### **The involvement of the Chinese military**

A detailed investigation published in June 2023 by *The Times* demonstrates the involvement of the Chinese military in the gain-of-function research, which it funded.<sup>4</sup> Some of this research was covert, as it never came to the attention of the US collaborators, e.g. Peter Daszak. US investigators said that the purpose was to produce bioweapons, and, indeed, a book published in 2015 by the military academy discusses how SARS viruses represent a “new era of genetic weapons” that can be “artificially manipulated into an emerging human disease virus, then weaponised and unleashed.” Clearly, if a country could vaccinate its population against its own secret and deadly virus, it might have a weapon to shift the balance of world power.

The People’s Liberation Army, as it is euphemistically called even though it killed its own people at the Tiananmen massacre in 1989,<sup>1</sup> had its own vaccine specialist, Zhou Yusen, a decorated military scientist at the Academy of Military Medical Sciences, who had collaborated with the Wuhan scientists.<sup>4</sup> Suspicion fell on him after the pandemic because he produced a patent for a COVID-19 vaccine with remarkable speed in February 2020.

In May 2020, aged just 54, Zhou appears to have died, a fact mentioned only in passing in a Chinese-media report and in a scientific paper that placed the word “deceased” in brackets after his name. Witnesses are said to have told the US investigation that Zhou fell from the roof of the Wuhan institute, although this has not been verified.

In one of the animal experiments, the scientists had created a highly infectious super-coronavirus with a terrifying kill-rate that in all probability would never have emerged in nature. In just two weeks, the mutant virus killed 6 out of 8 mice and just after the infection, the mice’s human-like lungs were found to contain a viral load up to 10,000 times greater than the original virus.

When Daszak filed a grant renewal application to the NIH, he did not mention the deaths but claimed that the mice had experienced “mild SARS-like clinical signs” when they were infected with the mutant virus. He eventually provided details of the experiment’s deadly results to the US authorities in a report after the COVID-19 pandemic and now claimed that his 2018 statement about the “mild” illness was based on preliminary results - even though the experiment had taken place several months before he issued the false statement.

The US investigators spoke to two researchers working at a US laboratory who were collaborating with the Wuhan institute at the time of the outbreak. They said the Wuhan scientists had inserted furin cleavage sites into viruses in 2019 in exactly the way proposed in Daszak’s failed funding application. They also saw evidence that the institute was conducting “serial passaging” experiments whereby the most damaging virus strain is selected for repeat experiments to produce a deadly strain much more quickly than what would be possible based on natural evolution.

## ***The Lancet's role in the cover up***

On 19 February 2020, a group of virologists and others published a *Lancet* letter, which derailed the debate about the origin of COVID-19.<sup>10</sup> This was the darkest moment in science in my lifetime and I have described the issues in detail in a book.<sup>1</sup>

Peter Daszak secretly organised and drafted the *Lancet* letter. The worst part of the letter was this: “The rapid, open, and transparent sharing of data on this outbreak is now being threatened by rumours and misinformation around its origins. We stand together to strongly condemn conspiracy theories suggesting that COVID-19 does not have a natural origin ... Conspiracy theories do nothing but create fear, rumours, and prejudice that jeopardise our global collaboration in the fight against this virus.”

There was no sharing of data. China hid everything that could incriminate them as being responsible for the pandemic through reckless experimenting with corona viruses and also disregarding the safety instructions in the lab.<sup>1</sup>

It is appalling to claim that a lab leak must be a conspiracy. Lab leaks of dangerous viruses happen virtually every year.<sup>1</sup> The SARS virus, responsible for the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome which emerged from Chinese bats in 2003 leaked from two laboratories in China, and the 1977 H1N1 influenza virus that caused about 700,000 deaths was also a lab escape from China.

Obviously, if the SARS-CoV-2 virus had escaped from research Daszak funded, he would be potentially culpable. He urged colleagues involved in gain-of-function research not to sign the letter, in order to obscure the connection, telling one of them: “We'll then put it out in a way that doesn't link it back to our collaboration so we maximize an independent voice.”

After 1.5 years with Daszak's bullying, lies and arrogance,<sup>1</sup> people had finally had enough. In September 2021, a group of scientists, the Paris Group, called for his removal in a letter they sent to the NIH and the Department of Health and Human Services because he had “withheld critical information and misled public opinion by expressing falsehoods.”<sup>11</sup> They cited a tweet where Daszak claimed the Chinese labs he worked with had never kept live bats, even though by the Wuhan scientists' own accounts, live bats were present at the facility since at least 2009.

## **Conclusions**

COVID-19 is the pandemic that should never have occurred. It is deeply concerning that the WHO and our governments have not yet called for a ban on this highly dangerous playing with fire research that hasn't led to anything of use but to the death of over 7 million people.

Science is about probabilities. When I consider the odds for the various possible explanations, I have no doubt that the pandemic was caused by a lab leak in Wuhan and that the virus was manufactured there.

The cover up of the origin of SARS-CoV-2 is the worst in medical history. This will stand as a pillar of shame in the coming centuries.

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