

The COVID Rabbit Hole: An Inside Look at the Virus' Origin

In early 2020, a Scripps Research virologist discovered a paper describing gain-of-function techniques that looked like a how-to manual for building the Wuhan coronavirus in a laboratory.



[Dr. Joseph Mercola](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Evidence points to SARS-CoV-2 being the result of a lab leak, and that Dr. Anthony Fauci, Harvard researchers, China, the mainstream media, the World Health Organization and tech companies all worked together to cover it up. U.S. Right to Know has published a detailed timeline of the cover-up
- In mid-January 2020, then-director of the CDC, Dr. Robert Redfield voiced concerns that the pandemic may have been the result of a lab leak at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) in China. He called Fauci, Wellcome Trust director Jeremy Farrar, and World Health Organization director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, urging each of them to “take the lab leak hypothesis with extreme seriousness.” To this day, he believes the lab leak theory is the most credible
- In his memoir, “Spike,” Farrar noted that emails were circulating among credible scientists “suggesting the virus looked almost engineered to infect human cells.” The topic so concerned him, he acquired a burner phone and instructed his contacts to use different phones and email accounts when discussing the matter
- January 29, 2020, Scripps Research virologist Kristian Andersen discovered a research paper describing gain-of-function techniques used on coronaviruses at the WIV that could have given rise to SARS-CoV-2. According to Andersen, the study looked like a how-to manual for building the Wuhan coronavirus
- Andersen and several other researchers who initially suspected a lab leak rapidly changed their minds, coincidentally mere days after the Chinese real estate company Evergrande made a large donation to Harvard Medical School

That all of our federal health agencies are captured by industry can no longer be in doubt. The COVID pandemic has confirmed lingering suspicions of this, and then some. Captured agencies that are now

more or less openly working against the interest of the American public include the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

They have repeatedly authorized experimental mRNA-based COVID shots despite overwhelming evidence of harm and little to no benefit. The National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), which has been in charge of all U.S. biodefense research since 2003, under the leadership of Dr. Anthony Fauci, is also part of this group.

As reported by Breaking Points with Krystal and Saagar (video above), evidence points to SARS-CoV-2 being the result of a lab leak, and that Fauci, Harvard researchers, China, the mainstream media, the World Health Organization and tech companies all worked together to cover it up. In his report, Saagar reviews the timeline of that cover-up, published by U.S. Right to Know (USRTK) September 14, 2022.[1](#)

Timeline of the Lab Leak Cover-Up — January 2020

In mid-January 2020, then-director of the CDC, Dr. Robert Redfield, a virologist, voiced concerns that the pandemic may have been the result of a lab leak at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) in China. He told Vanity Fair that he called Fauci, Wellcome Trust director Jeremy Farrar, and World Health Organization director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, urging each of them to “take the lab-leak hypothesis with extreme seriousness.”[2](#)

In his memoir, “Spike,” Farrar also noted that emails were circulating among credible scientists “suggesting the virus looked almost engineered to infect human cells.”[3](#) The topic so concerned him, he acquired a burner phone and instructed his contacts to use different phones and email accounts when discussing the matter.

January 27, 2020, Fauci was reminded that he funds coronavirus research at the WIV by way of the EcoHealth Alliance, which by then had been collaborating with the WIV on coronavirus research for the previous five years. Two days later (January 29) Scripps Research virologist Kristian Andersen discovered a paper describing gain-of-function techniques used on coronaviruses at the WIV that could potentially have given rise to SARS-CoV-2. As reported by USRTK:[4](#)

“Andersen became alarmed that a bat coronavirus may have been engineered to infect humans, pointing to the receptor binding domain and furin cleavage site ... He also flagged a gain-of-function study that ‘looked like a how-to manual for building the Wuhan coronavirus in a laboratory.’

‘Andersen found a scientific paper where exactly this technique had been used to modify the spike protein of the original SARS-CoV-1 virus, the one that had caused the SARS outbreak of 2002/3,’ Farrar wrote. ‘The pair knew of a laboratory where researchers had been experimenting on coronaviruses for years: the Wuhan Institute of Virology, in the city at the heart of the outbreak.’

The title of this paper is unknown. But it is clear that a 2015 paper⁵ involving gain-of-function work with a SARS-CoV backbone at the Wuhan Institute of Virology appears to have alarmed Fauci a few days later.

The 2015 paper had been given an abbreviated title: 'SARS Gain of function.' Andersen and [University of Sydney virologist Edward] Holmes met on a Zoom call. 'Fuck, this is bad,' Holmes said in response to Andersen's findings."

January 31, 2020, Andersen wrote an email to Fauci, stating that the virus looked unnatural to him and three other virologists who had looked at its genetic sequence, and that all four of them “find the genome to be inconsistent with expectations from evolutionary theory.”

The three virologists in question were Robert (Bob) Garry at the Tulane Cancer Center, Eddie Holmes at the University of Sydney and Michael Farzan, chair of the Scripps Research Department of Immunology and Microbiology. According to Farrar's memoir, Holmes was at that time 80% sure the virus came from a lab, while Andersen estimated the risk of it being from a lab leak at 60% to 70%.

Two hours after Andersen gave him the bad news, shortly past midnight, Fauci emailed NIAID principal deputy director Hugh Auchincloss, telling him “It is essential that we speak this AM. Keep your cell phone on.”

He also instructed Auchincloss to read an attached scientific paper, thought to be the 2015 Nature paper “A SARS-Like Cluster of Circulating Bat Coronaviruses Shows Potential for Human Emergence,” which the NIH had funded through an EcoHealth Alliance grant, and told him he “will have tasks today that must be done.”

That paper, co-led by WIV director Zhengli Shi, described how they'd spliced the spike protein of one coronavirus into a SARS-CoV backbone. Importantly, the authors noted that additional experimentation “may be too risky to pursue.”

Cover-Up Timeline: February 2020

Shortly before noon February 1, 2020, then-director of the NIH, Dr. Francis Collins, emailed a preprint study authored by Shi to Fauci, describing several coronaviruses, including one called RaTG13. Collins added that there's “No evidence this work was supported by NIH.” At 2 p.m., Fauci and Collins both joined a confidential teleconference organized by Farrar.

Other attendees included Andersen, Holmes, Garry, University of Edinburg virologist Andrew Rambaut, Erasmus MC virologist Ron Fouchier, Erasmus MC department of viroscience director Marion Koopmans, Institute of Virology at Charite Hospital director Christian Drosten, German Primate Center virologist Stefan Pohlman, Wellcome deputy chair Mike Ferguson, Wellcome chief operating officer Paul Schreier, and chief scientific adviser to the U.K., Patrick Vallance.

Redfield was not invited, despite his earlier discussions with Fauci and Farrar. Later that evening, someone in the group (name redacted) emailed the group (although only Farrar and Vallance's names

are unredacted) asking, “We need to talk about the backbone too, not just the insert?” That question is important, as scientists on this call ended up writing a paper dismissing the lab leak theory as pure bunk.

The next day, the virologists exchanged thoughts. At that time, several were leaning toward it being a manufactured virus. Garry stressed he couldn’t understand how SARS-CoV-2 could have emerged naturally, and Farzan was “bothered by the furin site” and could not explain the presence of it “as an event outside the lab.”

In an email, Farzan suggested the unique features in SARS-CoV-2 might best be explained by “continued passage of virus in tissue culture ... accidentally creating a virus that would be primed for rapid transmission between humans via gain of furin site (from tissue culture) and adaption to human ACE2 receptor via repeated passage.”

Talking About a Lab Leak Would ‘Harm Science in General’

Fouchier, who in 2011 alarmed the world by modifying the deadly avian flu (H5N1) to make it spread between ferrets,⁶ warned the group that continuing this debate “would unnecessarily distract top researchers from their active duties and do unnecessary harm to science in general.”

Within a couple of hours, Collins had jumped on Fouchier’s bandwagon. He emailed Fauci, Farrar and NIH official Lawrence Tabak, stating he was “quickly coming around to the view that a natural origin is more likely,” and that a “swift convening of experts in a confidence inspiring framework” was needed to quell “voices of conspiracy” that could do “great potential harm to science and international harmony.”

Within the hour, Farrar forwarded an article by ZeroHedge to Fauci, Collins and Tabak, which discussed HIV insertions found in SARS-CoV-2. Approximately 2.5 hours after that, Twitter suspended ZeroHedge.

While not included in USRTK’s timeline, investigative journalist Ashley Rindsberg in May 2022 reported on a curious coincidence that took place February 2, 2020.⁷ Evergrande, one of the largest real estate companies in the world, which has close ties to the Chinese Communist Party and is in serious financial trouble, donated \$115 million to Harvard Medical School.

Harvard dean George Daley emailed Fauci that morning, informing him of the meeting with Evergrande’s CEO Jack Zia and its chief health officer Dr. Jack Liu. For unknown reasons, Daley asked Fauci to share information “on your current efforts to coordinate a response.” Fauci and Collins phoned Daley and the Evergrande officials the next day.

Just two days after that, February 4, Farrar circulated a rough draft of what was to become “The Proximal Origin of SARS-CoV-2,”⁸ which completely denied any possibility of a lab leak. Did Evergrande’s donation to Harvard have anything to do with Harvard scientists suddenly changing their views on the lab leak theory?⁹

According to USRTK, “Holmes had emailed Farrar the summary, noting that ‘It’s fundamental science and completely neutral as written. Did not mention other anomalies as this will make us look like loons.’” Farrar at that point stated he was 50/50 on the lab leak theory, while Holmes was 60/40 in favor of a lab leak.

Andersen, meanwhile, at this point changed his tune and encouraged the scientists to claim the virus was “consistent with natural evolution,” which is the complete opposite of his view just a few days earlier, when he told Fauci the genome was “inconsistent with expectations from evolutionary theory.”

At the same time that all of this was going on, members of the group were pressuring the WHO to convene a group to investigate the virus’s origin. As we now know, that group was biased beyond belief and its conclusions so absurd that the world rejected it wholesale, forcing Ghebreyesus to backpedal and promise to launch a new investigation.

February 11, Ian Lipkin, a virologist and professor of epidemiology at Columbia University and a coauthor of “The Proximal Origin of SARS-CoV-2,” sent an email to his coauthors — Andersen, Rambaut, Holmes and Garry — stating the argument against genetic engineering was “well reasoned,” but that it “does not eliminate the possibility of inadvertent release following adaptation through selection in culture” at the WIV.

He continued, “Given the scale of the bat CoV research pursued there and the site of emergence of the first human cases, we have a nightmare of circumstantial evidence to assess.”

Cover-Up Timeline: March 2020

In a March 6, 2022, email, Andersen thanked Farrar, Fauci and Collins for their “advice and leadership” on the “Proximal Origin” paper. “The Proximal Origin of SARS-CoV-2”[10](#) was published in the journal Nature Medicine in mid-March.

As intended, it received massive media coverage, with headlines like, “The Coronavirus Did Not Escape from a Lab: Here’s How We Know,” “Once and for All, the New Coronavirus Was Not Made in a Lab,” and “Sorry, Conspiracy Theorists. Study Concludes COVID-19 Is Not a Laboratory Construct.” March 26, Collins even highlighted the paper on the NIH blog — but didn’t say a word about his own involvement.

Cover-Up Timeline: April and May 2020

Alas, despite best efforts, and with all of mainstream media helping push the false narrative, “conspiracy theories” about the virus being a lab-created bioweapon just would not stop — a fact that probably kept Fauci and Collins awake many a night.

In an April 16, 2020, email to Fauci titled “conspiracy gains momentum,” Collins asked, “Wondering if there is something NIH can do to help put down this very destructive conspiracy, with what seems to be growing momentum ... I hoped the Nature Medicine article on the genomic sequence of SARS-CoV-2 would settle this ...”

Fauci replied, “I would not do anything about this right now. It is a shiny object that will go away in times [sic].” Hours later, Fauci did a White House press conference in which he cited the “Proximal Origin” paper he helped conceive, telling reporters the virus arose naturally, and is “totally consistent with a jump of a species from an animal to a human.”

That same day, April 16, Holmes and a Chinese researcher also published “A Genomic Perspective on the Origin and Emergence of SARS-CoV-2,”¹¹ in which they argue that RaTG13 could not have been used to create SARS-CoV-2 because RaTG13 was sampled from the Yunnan Province while COVID-19 appeared in Wuhan. Furthermore, it would take 20 to 50 years for RaTG13 to mutate into SARS-CoV-2.

May 5, 2020, Lipkin emailed Chen Zhu, China’s former minister of health, expressing deep appreciation for “your efforts in steering and messaging” around COVID-19’s origin.

Cover-Up Timeline: July and August 2020

Fast-forward to July, and the authors of “Proximal Origin” had a new problem. An anonymous whistleblower contacted Science journalist Jon Cohen, sharing “the bizarre back-story” of the “Proximal Origin” paper.

Cohen, in turn, forwarded the message to Holmes and Andersen who, within three hours, conferred with Fauci and Farrar on how to respond. According to USRTK, Cohen has not released the email he received from the tipster, nor Holmes’ response. Cohen also never used it for an article.

By August 19, 2020, Fauci and Collins were again conferring about how to address critical news articles. One postulated the virus was created in a lab. The other two discussed NIAID grants to EcoHealth Alliance. Despite questions being raised about the connections between the NIH, EcoHealth and the WIV, the NIAID extended a new grant to EcoHealth and Andersen’s lab just eight days later.

Cover-Up Timeline: 2021

Efforts to keep a lid on the lab leak theory didn’t fare any better in 2021. At the end of March 2021, the WHO released its COVID origin report, which dismissed the lab leak theory, but backlash forced Ghebreyesus to stress that the investigation was incomplete and would continue.

June 1, emails received by BuzzFeed following a FOIA lawsuit revealed Andersen and other authors of the “Proximal Origin” paper had initially leaned toward it being a lab leak, and that Fauci and Collins

had participated in and probably steered its conception. Andersen denied the NIH had anything to do with the article and started deleting tweets amid the backlash.

In June, questions also arose about why the NIH deleted early SARS-CoV-2 genomic data from its public database. The deletion of the data was reported by evolutionary biologist Jesse Bloom on the preprint server BioRxiv. According to Bloom, Collins, Fauci, Andersen and Garry encouraged him to delete the preprint, which he refused to do.[12](#)

Cover-Up Timeline: 2022

In 2022, the cover-up started to unravel. BuzzFeed’s FOIA documents “starkly showed concerns among the authors [of the Proximal Origin paper] about unusual features of the genome,” USRTK writes. Garry, like Andersen before him, did what he could to protect Fauci and Collins, insisting they had nothing to do with the writing of that paper.

July 1, 2022, Lipkin, one of the “Proximal Origin” coauthors, was suddenly found to have once been a partner of EcoHealth Alliance, which was not reported in the paper’s conflict of interest section.

“The potential for conspiracy is really on the other side. The conspiracy is Collins, Fauci, and the established scientific community that has acted in an antithetical way to science.” ~ Former CDC director Robert Redfield

By the end of the month, new entries in an NIH genomic database revealed Holmes too has had an ongoing relationship with the WIV, including collaborative work on RaTG13, and Holmes, like Lipkin, did not disclose this in his “Proximal Origin” conflicts of interest statement.

Classified Information May Reveal Lab Accident

In a recent interview with investigative journalist Paul Thacker,[13](#) former CDC director Redfield discussed “inside battles with Fauci” and claimed classified information “will point to a lab accident in Wuhan.” Thacker writes:

“Tony and I are friends, but we don't agree on this at all,” Redfield told me. ‘The potential for conspiracy is really on the other side. The conspiracy is Collins, Fauci, and the established scientific community that has acted in an antithetical way to science.’

Speaking with me from his home in Baltimore, Redfield said that evidence in favor of a lab accident in China continues to accumulate and he expects more classified information to become public.”

In related news, September 15, 2022, The Lancet Commission also published its long-awaited report on the origin of SARS-CoV-2, and it’s not what Fauci and his cronies were hoping for. On the contrary, the

report outlines “the possibility that the COVID-19 pandemic may have originated with a pathogen leaked from a lab ...” The Independent reports.[14](#)

The report stresses that while it could have come from a natural spillover, it could just as easily be the result of a lab leak. Commission chairman Jeffrey Sachs has been outspoken about his suspicions that the virus emerged from a U.S.-backed research program in China. At the same time, continued in-depth investigation continues to be hampered by misplaced allegiance to the CCP. As reported by Matt Ridley in The Telegraph:[15](#)

“The Lancet Commission ... has concluded that ‘the origin of the virus remains unknown’ and that ‘both natural and laboratory spillovers are in play and need further investigation.’ This conclusion matters because there has been an attempt to shut down all curiosity about the origin of the pandemic ...

The Sachs Commission points out that a great many related viruses were collected from bats and engineered by a laboratory at the Wuhan Institute of Virology in collaboration with US partners in the years leading up to the outbreak. That simple fact puts the Wuhan lab under suspicion.

Further, SARS-CoV-2 contains a dangerous feature called a furin cleavage site in its spike gene that is found in no other virus of this kind (the sarbecoviruses). Many scientists admitted early in the pandemic to being baffled as to how it could have acquired this feature naturally yet with minimal other mutations in its spike gene.

Last year a document surfaced showing that scientists in Wuhan and elsewhere were in 2018 considering inserting exactly such a furin cleavage site into newly discovered sarbecoviruses to test their virulence in human cells ...

The point Sachs’s team is making is that the technology used in Wuhan to create ‘chimeric’ (hybrid) sarbecoviruses and insert material into their genomes originated in the University of North Carolina with other coronaviruses, and it would be nice ... if US researchers who collaborated with Wuhan were more forthcoming about what they know.

The Sachs Commission makes the crucial point that ‘no independent, transparent, and science-based investigation has been carried out regarding the bioengineering of Sars-like viruses that was underway before the outbreak of Covid-19’ ...

Pause to notice how shocking this is. Around 20 million are dead because of a virus new to the human species. A strong possibility is that it originated in laboratory research that was going on in the city where it started.

Yet the notebooks and databases from that lab have never been made available, and many scientists and politicians are not even prepared to criticize the Chinese government over this lack of cooperation.

The reason that prominent western scientists gave in private emails in 2020 for not wanting to discuss a possible lab origin of the virus was that it might do harm to ‘international harmony.’ What happened to seeking the truth?”

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[1 USRTK September 14, 2022](#)

[2 Vanity Fair March 31, 2022](#)

[3 USRTK September 14, 2022](#)

[4 USRTK September 14, 2022](#)

[5 Nature Medicine 2015; 21: 1508-1513](#)

[6 Science February 8, 2019](#)

[7 Spectator World May 26, 2022 \(Archived\)](#)

[8 Nature Medicine 2020; 26: 450-452](#)

[9 Twitter Marty Makary September 16, 2022](#)

[10 Nature Medicine 2020; 26: 450-452](#)

[11 Cell April 16, 2020; 181\(2\): 223-227](#)

[12 Vanity Fair March 31, 2022](#)

[13 The Disinformation Chronicle September 15, 2022](#)

[14 The Independent September 15, 2022 \(Archived\)](#)

[15 The Telegraph September 18, 2022 \(Archived\)](#)