

MEMORANDUM

July 20, 2021

To: Republican Members, House Committee on Oversight and Reform & Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis

From: Republican Committee Staff

Subject: Findings from the Republican-Led Expert Forum entitled “Led By Science: The COVID-19 Origin Story”

“Sometimes the most obvious explanation is indeed the correct one.” - Dr. Brett Giroir

On Tuesday June 29, 2021, Republicans on the Select Subcommittee held an Expert Forum to examine the available scientific evidence of the origins of COVID-19. This memorandum provides Members a summary of the expert testimony and scientific evidence revealed during that Forum.

The evidence uncovered by Committee Republicans does not alleviate the Committee and Select Subcommittee Democrats’ duty to launch a full and complete investigation by holding hearings with and requesting documents from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Institutes of Health, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, the Intelligence Community, and any related grantees or researchers, including EcoHealth Alliance—the entity that funneled U.S. taxpayer dollars overseas to China. Discovering the origins of this pandemic is the first step in a global defensive effort to stop future pandemics.

This should not be a partisan issue. Finding the origins of COVID-19 is a global issue. Republicans, with or without Democrats, will continue to press to hold China accountable for the deaths of more than 600,000 Americans and millions more worldwide.

COVID-19 Likely Originated in the Wuhan Institute of Virology

THE EXPERT TESTIMONY

- Dr. Giroir: “I assess that the most likely origin was an accidental infection of laboratory personnel from the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), with secondary transmission to the local population, and subsequent spread to hundreds of millions of people around the world.”
- Dr. Steven Quay: “I believe the evidence conclusively establishes that the COVID pandemic was not a natural process but instead came from a laboratory in Wuhan, China...”
- Dr. Richard Muller: “Every scientific test that distinguishes between the zoonotic and lab leak origins gives results that highly favor the lab origin. We have found no credible evidence that favors zoonotic origin.”

THE EVIDENCE

- Over 80,000 samples from 209 species of animals associated with the Wuhan Market, and around China, were examined for medical evidence of COVID-19 but zero samples were positive.
- The only animals not tested were the humanized mice located in the WIV—where researchers were conducting coronavirus gain of function experiments.
- Previous coronavirus epidemics, like SARS1 and MERS, showed extensive human infection prior to developing human-to-human transmission. There were 9,522 stored hospital records tested from early in the pandemic. Based on SARS1 and MERS, one would expect around 100-400 positive cases but zero were found.
- The absence of genetic diversity in COVID-19 points to a single-entry point—the WIV—into the human population, not multiple jumps, as predicted. This is based on the viral trajectory of SARS1 and MERS.
- A study of the earliest infected patients shows that these novel cases occurred in people who had *not* visited the Wuhan Market.
- In May 2020, the Chinese CDC admitted that the Wuhan Market was *not* the source of the virus.

COVID-19 Was Likely Modified Through Dangerous Gain of Function Research

THE EXPERT TESTIMONY

- Dr. Giroir: “We know that the [WIV] was conducting potentially dangerous research on bat coronaviruses...including gain of function research. This was proven by a 2015 Nature Medicine publication in which investigators from [the WIV]...reported the creation of a new, hybrid bat coronavirus that could bind to and infect human airway cells.”
- Dr. Quay: “[COVID-19] has a unique trigger on its surface called a furin cleavage site and a unique code for that site, called a CGG-CGG dimer...[I]n gain of function experiments, the WIV...[has] inserted furin sites into viruses. It is the only sure method that always works and makes viruses more infectious. And the CGG-CGG code found in [COVID-19] is commonly used in the laboratory; you can literally order it on the internet.”
- Dr. Quay: “[COVID-19] was pre-adapted for human-to-human transmission from the first patient. Specifically, the part of the virus that interacts with human cells was 99.5% optimized. A commonly used gain of function method to optimize the COVID[-19] virus would have been...infect[ing]...mice, wait a week or so, and then recover the virus from the sickest mouse...then you repeat...this will produce a virus that can kill every humanized mouse.”

→ Dr. Muller: “No coronavirus...had a furin cleavage site. Moreover, no CGG-CGG doublet anywhere in the subgenus. There is no plausible natural origin for this critical component.”

THE EVIDENCE

→ COVID-19 has two unique indicators of gain of function research: (1) a furin cleavage site to make it more infectious and (2) a CGG-CGG dimer, which is commonly used in a laboratory.

→ Laboratory gain of function leaves a virus pre-optimized for human-to-human transmission. COVID-19 was 99.5 percent optimized for human infection from the first patient. SARS1 was only 17 percent. This implies it was part of the WIV’s gain of function program.

→ SARS1 was zoonotic and about 5,000 people were infected. MERS was zoonotic and about 7,000 people were infected. COVID-19 has infected nearly 200 million people.

→ In September 2019, the WIV deleted their public viral sequence library which housed the genomes of all viruses being researched within the WIV, including gain of function research.

→ The WIV was editing coronaviruses to make them more transmissible by taking SARS1 and inserting pieces of a novel-coronavirus to increase human-to-human transmissibility.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) Are Likely Involved in Dangerous Research in China

THE EXPERT TESTIMONY

→ Dr. Giroir: “[T]here have been multiple NIH grants to the EcoHealth Alliance all entitled ‘Understanding the Risk of Bat Coronavirus Emergence’...[that] appear to be using the same laboratory methods that could create novel, hybrid, pandemic causing pathogens.”

→ Dr. Quay: “[T]he WIV has acknowledged that for several years they’ve worked with humanized mice developed by Dr. Ralph Baric’s laboratory in North Carolina and funded at U.S. taxpayers’ expense.”

→ Dr. Quay: “I think one of the things we saw here was that the gain of function research at the [WIV] was set up to be reviewed inside the NIH, and it was never sent to them to look at.”

→ Dr. Giroir: “It’s unbelievable to me that coronavirus work would not get even into to the [P3 oversight] process. If you look at the abstract from the latest grant that was done to EcoHealth, it talks about using protein sequence data, infectious clone technology...this is all gain of function.”

THE EVIDENCE

→ Grant applications from EcoHealth Alliance to the NIH and NIAID describe work to be completed at the WIV that includes gain of function research.

- The NIH, through EcoHealth and other grantee organizations, funded gain of function research even during a mandated pause between 2014-2017.
- After 2017, the pause was lifted and replaced with an impartial oversight body, the P3. According to recently released emails, the NIH bypassed the P3 to continue funding gain of function research at the WIV.
- No coronavirus work has gone through P3 oversight process. In fact, since 2017, not a single grant, for any research, has gone through P3 oversight process.

The World Health Organization (WHO) Did Not Conduct an Impartial Investigation

THE EXPERT TESTIMONY

- Dr. Giroir: “The WHO cannot be relied upon to do an authoritative investigation, because it is a multi-lateral organization with no authority to do anything in China that is not directly approved by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).”
- Dr. Giroir: “[T]he WHO can never be relied on to guarantee transparency from repressive regimes, nor assure the health and safety of the American Public.”
- Dr. Giroir: “Saying the UN or the WHO is non-political is just...it’s fantasy.”

THE EVIDENCE

- The WHO did not conduct an impartial investigation of the origins of COVID-19 and therefore did not release a reputable or conclusive report on the subject for the following reasons:
 - The CCP was given full veto power over inclusion of American scientists.
 - The CCP vetoed the three Americans put forward by the U.S. government.
 - The only American accepted was the CEO of EcoHealth, Dr. Peter Daszak, who applied to be a member of the investigative team without U.S. government approval and has historically funded the WIV and advocates for gain of function research.
 - The CCP designed the mission’s itinerary and refused access to Chinese scientists and raw data.
 - The CCP was permitted to edit and alter the final report.

The CCP and its People's Liberation Army (PLA) Have an Advanced Bioweapons Program that May Operate Within the WIV

THE EXPERT TESTIMONY

- Dr. David Asher: “China does have a biological weapons program. It does involve synthetic biology and gain of function technology.”
- Dr. Asher: “I think this was a laboratory disaster, a biological meltdown. But then [the CCP] covered it up, and when they covered it up and didn't tell [the U.S. government] and others, it essentially proliferated it as a weaponized vector.”
- Dr. Giroir: “Export controls should also include Americans' DNA sequences. Even the NIH often exports gene sequencing for many of our people to China. China absolutely keeps databases on what are [American] genes? What are [American] susceptibilities? Is there a possibility of ethnic weapons?”

THE EVIDENCE

- In January 2020, PLA Major General Chen Wei was put in charge of viral containment efforts in Wuhan. General Chen is the CCP's top biological weapons expert.
- The WIV collaborated on publications and secret projects with the PLA, including laboratory animal experiments since at least 2017.
- The CCP's 2011 declaration to the United Nations Biological Weapons Convention outlines where it anticipates biological warfare heading. And describes many of the unusually or unexpectedly dangerous aspects of COVID-19:
 - “synthetic biotechnology poses a huge latent threat to mankind, as it could be used in the future to create pathogens of even greater toxicity and infectiousness than those currently known;”
 - “the sequencing of pathogen DNA...can also be used to synthesize new pathogens...causing traditional means of dealing with infectious disease to fail and rendering the prevention and control of such disease even harder;”
 - “study of systems biology in the body...can also create the potential for biological weapons based on genetic differences between races;”
 - “drugs can be administered through aerosol inhalation, which can benefit in requiring recipient non-compliance...effectively spreading pathogens and disease-causing genes;” and
 - “foreign genes or viruses can be introduced into the target population asymptotically...enabling a biological weapon attack to be mounted covertly.”