

Treasure Trove of Damning Evidence Surrounding COVID Origin

Analysis by [Dr. Joseph Mercola](#)

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › U.S. House Republicans investigating the origin of COVID-19 inadvertently released a trove of new documents that shed light on deliberations among the scientists in the earliest days of the pandemic
- › July 11, 2023, the subcommittee on the origin of COVID-19 held a hearing on the “Proximal Origin” paper, in which they questioned Dr. Robert Garry of Tulane University and Dr. Kristian Andersen of Scripps, two of the paper’s authors
- › February 1, 2020, Dr. Anthony Fauci convened a conference call with nearly a dozen scientists. Their scientific consensus was that SARS-CoV-2 appeared to be genetically engineered and that the pandemic was likely the result of a lab escape
- › Later that day, several of the authors drafted a paper that drew the opposite conclusion. “The Proximal Origin of Sars-Cov-2,” a letter to the editor, was published in Nature Medicine, March 17, 2020. It ended up being widely cited by media as evidence of a scientific consensus that the virus emerged naturally and jumped species

According to a July 12, 2023, article by Ryan Grim published by The Intercept,¹ U.S. House Republicans investigating the origin of COVID-19 “appear to have inadvertently released a trove of new documents ... that shed light on deliberations among the scientists who drafted a key paper in February and March of 2020.”

The paper in question is “The Proximal Origin of Sars-Cov-2,”² a letter to the editor of Nature Medicine published March 17, 2020. This letter ended up being widely cited by

the media as evidence of a scientific consensus that the virus emerged naturally and jumped species.

The House Subcommittee on the origin of COVID-19 devoted an entire report to this paper, showing how the authors presented a false conclusion to the public while privately believing the virus had escaped from the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV).

The report was published July 11, 2023, the same day the subcommittee also held a hearing on the “Proximal Origin” paper, in which they questioned Robert Garry, Ph.D., of Tulane University and Kristian Andersen, Ph.D., of Scripps, two of the scientists involved in its creation. The Intercept explains how more information than intended ended up out in the open:³

“According to the metadata in the PDF of the report, it was created using ‘Acrobat PDFMaker 23 for Word,’ indicating that the report was originally drafted as a Word document. Word, however, retains the original image when an image is cropped, as do many other apps ...

The Intercept was able to extract the original, complete images from the PDF using freely available tools, following the work of a Twitter sleuth. All the files can be found here.”⁴

The original subcommittee report has now been taken down.

Background

February 1, 2020, Dr. Anthony Fauci, then-director of the National Institutes of Allergies and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and Dr. Francis Collins, then-director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) convened a conference call with 11 scientists to discuss COVID-19.

On that conference call, Drs. Fauci and Collins were warned that COVID-19 may have leaked from the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) – and that the virus appeared to be

the result of genetic engineering. Minutes from the call reveal a lab escape was in fact the consensus among the gathered experts on that day.

Yet later that very day, a first draft of “The Proximal Origin” paper had been written, and three days later, on February 4, Fauci was sent a copy for editing and approval. The authors have maintained that new information changed their minds, but what, exactly, could they have learned in that short time? As it turns out, nothing.

According to The Intercept, “Slack messages and emails show that their initial inclination toward a lab escape remained long past that time.” So, as initially suspected, the “Proximal Origin” paper appears to have been nothing more than an attempt to control the narrative.

Zoonotic Origin Pushers Suspected Lab Leak

“In a Slack exchange February 2, 2020, between Andersen and Andrew Rambaut of the University of Edinburgh’s Institute of Evolutionary Biology in the School of Biological Sciences, it becomes clear how seriously the authors took the hypothesis that COVID may have leaked from a lab ... before they ultimately became dedicated to publicly dismissing it,” Grim writes.⁵

“ The main issue is that accidental escape is in fact highly likely — it’s not some fringe theory. ~ Kristian Andersen, Ph.D.”

In that Slack exchange, Andersen wrote:

“I believe RaTG13 is from Yuanan, which is about as far away from Wuhan as you can be and still be in China. What are the chances of finding viruses that are 96% identical given that distance? Seems strange given how many SARS-like viruses we have in bats.”

RaTG13 refers to a virus found in a Chinese mine in 2013 after several miners had fallen ill with COVID-like symptoms. This virus was stored and researched at the WIV. Rambaut replied to Andersen's comment:⁶

"I personally think we should get away from all the strange coincidence stuff. I agree it smells really fishy but without a smoking gun it will not do us any good.

The truth is never going to come out (if [lab] escape is the truth). Would need irrefutable evidence. My position is that the natural evolution is entirely plausible and we will have to leave it at that. Lab passaging might also generate this mutation but we have no evidence that that happened."

Rambaut also noted:⁷

"Given the shitshow that would happen if anyone serious accused the Chinese of even accidental release, my feeling is we should say that given there is no evidence of a specifically engineered virus, we cannot possibly distinguish between natural evolution and escape so we are content with ascribing it to natural processes."

While Andersen agreed with Rambaut's comment, saying "Yup. I totally agree that that's a very reasonable conclusion," he still, clearly, did not believe that COVID was caused by zoonotic transfer. Earlier in that same Slack thread, Andersen stressed that:⁸

"The main issue is that accidental escape is in fact highly likely – it's not some fringe theory. I absolutely agree that we can't prove one way or the other, but we never will be able to – however, that doesn't mean that by default the data is currently much more suggestive of a natural origin as opposed to e.g. passage. It is not – the furin cleavage site is very hard to explain."

The choice of words is ironic, considering the lab leak theory was dismissed as a fringe conspiracy theory in large part thanks to Andersen's "Proximal Origin" paper, which boldly proclaimed that "Our analyses clearly show that SARS-CoV-2 is not a laboratory

construct or a purposefully manipulated virus” and that “we do not believe any type of laboratory scenario is plausible.”

How Involved Was Fauci?

During the July 11, 2023, subcommittee hearing, Andersen insisted that Fauci and Collins had not influenced the conclusions presented in “Proximal Origin,” but doubts linger.

February 5, 2020, Andersen wrote that suspicions of genetic engineering and bioweapons research was “definitely not going away,” and that he was being approached by journalists about it. “There might be a time where we need to tackle that more directly head on,” he wrote, “but I’ll let the likes of Jeremy [Farrar] and Tony [Fauci] figure out how to do that.”

And while Fauci and Collins didn’t figure out how to quash the theory for good, they sure tried. April 16, 2020, Collins emailed Fauci expressing dismay that the “Proximal Origin” paper had failed to quash the lab leak hypothesis, and asked Fauci if there was anything else the NIH could do to “put down this very destructive conspiracy theory.”⁹

The next day, Fauci cited the paper from the White House podium and told reporters that COVID-19 was “totally consistent with a jump of a species from an animal to a human.”¹⁰

There are also questions about whether Fauci and other government officials may have used private emails to cover up their coverup. During the hearing, the subcommittee chairman reported that the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is investigating the conduct of Dr. David M. Morens, senior scientific adviser to Fauci.

The investigation was launched after the subcommittee released a 2021 email by Morens to several “Proximal Origins” authors, including Garry and Andersen, in which he admitted that he was using a personal Gmail account to evade the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).¹¹

Pressure From on High

In a February 16, 2020, email, Eddie Holmes, another one of the “Proximal Origins” authors, also alluded to “pressure” being applied, although he didn’t name names:

“Well, that’s suspicious ... he comes back 15 minutes after I submit? A natural phenomenon? I’m not sure we can exclude the hypothesis of deliberately engineered responsibility shirking. Anyway, it’s done. Sorry the last bit had to be done without you ... pressure from on high.”

According to Grim, “officials with the communications department at the NIH had been asking about the status of the submission,” and “Taken as a whole, the messages undercut the claims that the NIH took a hands-off approach to the paper.”

‘Impossible’ to Reject Lab Leak Theory

Andersen’s reply to the journal Nature also reveals that dismissing the lab leak theory was impossible from the very beginning, based on the data. Before the “Proximal Origin” paper was submitted to Nature Medicine, it had been pitched to – and rejected – by Nature.

The rejection letter specified that one reviewer thought the lab leak had to be conclusively rejected, lest it fuel conspiracy theories. According to that reviewer, once new pangolin sequences were published, “a lab origin will be extremely unlikely.” In a February 20, 2020, reply to Nature, Andersen wrote:

“Had that been the case, we would of course have included that – but the more sequences we see from pangolins (and we have been analyzing/discussing these very carefully) the more unlikely it seems that they’re the intermediate hosts.

Unfortunately, none of this helps refute a lab origin and the possibility must be considered as a serious scientific theory (which is what we do) and not dismissed out of hand as another ‘conspiracy’ theory. We all really, really wish

that we could do that (that's how this got started), but unfortunately it's not possible given the data."

However, by the time the paper was submitted to Nature Medicine, it had been further edited to more strongly dismiss the possibility of a lab leak.

A Deeper Cover-Up at Play?

According to Republicans on the subcommittee on the origin of COVID-19, the "Proximal Origin" paper may have been unduly influenced by Fauci and other government officials who sought to downplay the possibility that COVID-19 might have emerged from the WIV – a lab with a long history of U.S. funding of questionable gain-of-function research. Subcommittee chairman Rep. Brad Wenstrup, R-Ohio, said:¹²

"We are examining whether government officials, regardless of who they are, unfairly and perhaps biasedly tipped the scales toward a preferred origin theory

...

And, overall, we're examining whether scientific integrity was disregarded in favor of political expediency – maybe to conceal or diminish the government's relationship with the Wuhan Institute of Virology ...

Or maybe to avoid blaming China for any complicity, intended or otherwise, in a pandemic that has killed more than 1 million Americans and has had a crushing effect on all humankind itself."

Meanwhile, Garry, Andersen and certain Democrats tried to shift blame onto others, such as Sir Jeremy Farrar. However, by doing so, they only "highlight how insidious the process was," independent journalist Sam Hussein – who live-tweeted the hearing – writes.¹³ Quoting from Hussein's Substack article:¹⁴

"... Jeremy Farrar ... played a crucial role in pulling together the group of people who would sign 'Proximal Origin' ... he was also a signer of the Lancet letter,¹⁵ the other main pillar of propaganda from 2020 on COVID origins.

Farrar had been head of the highly influential Wellcome Trust in Britain and is now chief scientist for the WHO as it attempts a 'power grab.' This could hardly be more disturbing, but none of this was pointed out in the hearing.

Time and again, Farrar's name was invoked to let Fauci off the hook and never was it brought up to show how there was a deeper coverup going on."

Dutch virologist Ron Fouchier was also named as taking part in the meetings that led to the publication of "Proximal Origin." As noted by Hussein, no one bothered to explain the importance of his presence either.

Fouchier launched a firestorm of controversy in 2011 when he used serial passage to make the avian flu airborne.¹⁶ The New York Times warned that his work might lead to an "engineered doomsday."¹⁷

"But Fouchier didn't sign any either the Lancet letter or 'Proximal Origin' – quite likely because his doing so would have made alarm bells go off," Hussein writes.¹⁸

"This shows how the propaganda put out at the beginning of the pandemic was highly orchestrated to hinder people from seeing the possibility of lab origins for COVID and the dire threats involved. This raises further questions as to the wider agendas at play."

Sources and References

- ^{1, 3, 5, 6} [The Intercept July 12, 2023](#)
- ² [Nature Medicine March 17, 2020; 26: 450-452](#)
- ⁴ [Document Cloud Subcommittee on Coronavirus](#)
- ^{7, 8, 9} [The Nation July 12, 2023](#)
- ¹⁰ [USRTK April 11, 2023](#)
- ¹¹ [The Intercept June 29, 2023](#)
- ¹² [White House Oversight Committee July 11, 2023](#)
- ^{13, 14, 18} [Sam Hussein Substack July 13, 2023](#)
- ¹⁵ [The Lancet March 7, 2020; 395\(10226\): E42-E43](#)
- ¹⁶ [Science. 2012 Jun 22; 336\(6088\): 1534–1541](#)

- ¹⁷ NYT January 7, 2012