

## **Questions for Dr. Fauci**

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Dr. Anthony Fauci has been the primary advisor to President Trump during the coronavirus pandemic. Many Americans still believe that Fauci is a great virologist who has worked hard to protect Americans from a deadly threat. But even some members of the mainstream media are starting to ask questions about both Fauci and the agency he heads.

Gain-of-function research involves manipulating viruses in a laboratory setting in order to investigate their potential to infect humans. This type of research is very controversial due to the risk of accidental release of a mutated virus that could cause a pandemic. While hundreds of researchers have spoken out against it, Dr. Fauci has historically defended this type of research. He wrote this in an editorial in the *Washington Post* on December 30 2011: "[D]etermining the molecular Achilles' heel of these viruses can allow scientists to identify novel antiviral drug targets that could be used to prevent infection in those at risk or to better treat those who become infected. Decades of experience tells us that disseminating information gained through biomedical research to legitimate scientists and health officials provides a critical foundation for generating appropriate countermeasures and, ultimately, protecting the public health."<sup>1</sup>

In spite of Fauci's enthusiasm for it, the National Institutes of Health issued a moratorium on funding for gain-of-function research in 2014. Researchers involved in this type of work were urged to discontinue their activities until risks and benefits could be more clearly defined.<sup>2</sup> A recent *Newsweek* article reports that reviews were conducted, but behind closed doors and away from public scrutiny. The moratorium was lifted in December 2017.

But, as reported in last week's newsletter, a new gain-of-function research project involving bat coronaviruses began in 2015, two years before the moratorium ended. Fauci's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and the Chinese government authorized funding for both American researchers and the Wuhan Institute of Virology for the purpose of transforming a bat coronavirus into one that could infect and be transmitted by humans. They were successful, and the researchers reported their work in a prestigious European journal.<sup>3</sup> In the article, the researchers expressed some concern about whether or not their research was in violation of U.S. rules.

According to the *Newsweek* article, in 2019, the NIAID renewed the grant and committed an additional \$3.7 million dollars for 5 more years of research, bringing the total invested in this research to \$7.4 million. EcoHealth Alliance was the recipient of the grant. This organization describes itself as a "...global environmental health non-

profit organization dedicated to protecting wildlife and public health from the emergence of disease." EcoHealth has some interesting partners that include:<sup>4</sup>

- Drug companies including Johnson and Johnson, which has received hundreds of millions of dollars from the U.S. government for the development of a COVID-19 vaccine<sup>5</sup>
- Johns Hopkins, which staged Event 201 in October 2019, a simulation of a coronavirus pandemic that would kill 65 million people <sup>6</sup>
- The Centers for Disease Control
- The National Institutes of Health
- The New York City Department of Health

The proposal for the more recent funding stated that "We will use S protein sequence data, infectious clone technology, in vitro and in vivo infection experiments and analysis of receptor binding to test the hypothesis that % divergence thresholds in S protein sequences predict **spillover potential** (emphasis mine)."<sup>7</sup> "Spillover potential" means the ability of a virus to jump from animals to humans, and attach to receptors in human cells. The virus to be used in this research was a bat coronavirus.

The mainstream media has largely ignored any information that is critical of Fauci or the current response of government and health officials to COVID-19. But *Newsweek* chose to cover this story last week, perhaps an encouraging sign.<sup>8</sup> *Newsweek* reports that Fauci did not respond to requests for comment, but that the NIH issued this statement: "Most emerging human viruses come from wildlife, and these represent a significant threat to public health and biosecurity in the US and globally, as demonstrated by the SARS epidemic of 2002-03, and the current COVID-19 pandemic.... scientific research indicates that there is no evidence that suggests the virus was created in a laboratory."<sup>9</sup>

The Trump administration ended funding for this research on April 24.<sup>10</sup>

It is not known at this time if Fauci had any direct involvement in arranging or overseeing these research projects. We do know that he was head of the NIAID during the entire time period in which the research was conducted. Agency heads are – or should be – held responsible for the actions of their employees and organizations. And generally ignorance is not acceptable as a means for avoiding responsibility in many court proceedings. Perhaps other members of the mainstream media will become curious and decide to look into these matters further.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/>

<sup>2</sup> Akst J. "Moratorium on Gain-of-Function Research." *The Scientist* October 21 2014

<sup>3</sup> Menachery VD, Yount Jr BI, Debbink K et al. "A SARS-like cluster of circulating bat coronaviruses shows potential for human emergence." *Nature Med* 2015 Dec;21(12)1508--1513

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ecohealthalliance.org/partners>

<sup>5</sup> Schleunes A. "US Selects Two COVID-19 Vaccine Candidates for Huge Investment." *The Scientist* April 1 2020

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/event201/>

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<sup>7</sup> <https://grantome.com/grant/NIH/R01-AI110964-06>

<sup>8</sup> Guterl F. "Dr. Fauci Backed Controversial Wuhan Lab With U.S. Dollars for Risky Coronavirus Research." *Newsweek* April 28 2020

<sup>9</sup> Guterl F. "Dr. Fauci Backed Controversial Wuhan Lab With U.S. Dollars for Risky Coronavirus Research." *Newsweek* April 28 2020

<sup>10</sup> Owerlohle S. "Trump cuts U.S. research on bat-human virus transmission over China ties." *Politico* April 27 2020