

Scientists hone in on “missing link” in the natural origins of COVID-19

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Earlier this month, scientists revealed the closest discovery yet to a “smoking gun” in the search for the origins of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic.

In a new pre-print paper by the French Institute Pasteur and the University of Laos, an international team of scientists say they have found a group of viruses that are the closest relatives of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

In the part of the virus critical to infecting humans, called the receptor-binding domain (RBD), the newly discovered viruses are more similar to the original variant of SARS-CoV-2 than are the variants of that virus that have emerged in the past year, including the currently dominant Delta variant.

“Sequences very close to those of the early strains of SARS-CoV-2 responsible for the pandemic exist in nature, and are found in several *Rhinolophus* bat species,” concludes the paper.

Professor Stuart Neil, head of the department of infectious diseases at King’s College London told the Telegraph: “Two or three of these viruses have RBDs which is only two or three changes from that seen in SARS-CoV-2—essentially, closer to the original than some of the variants of concern we see out there in some respects.”

The authors continue, “These viruses may have contributed to SARS-CoV-2’s origin and may intrinsically pose a future risk of direct transmission to humans.”

The newly discovered viruses are more effective at infecting human beings than RaTG13, the bat coronavirus discovered in 2012 that had up to now been the closest relative to SARS-CoV-2.

The scientists note, “The RBDs of the viruses found in our study are closer to that of SARS-CoV-2 than to the RaTG13 RBD, the virus identified in *R. affinis*

from the Mojiang mineshaft where pneumonia cases with clinical characteristics strikingly similar to COVID-19 were recorded in 2012.”

In the narrative presented in the US media, the investigation of the origins of COVID-19 is a constant tug-of-war between two competing hypotheses, both backed by evidence. There is supposedly an ongoing “debate” between proponents of the natural origins of COVID-19 and the theory that the disease was released from the Wuhan Institute of Virology in China.

But in the scientific community, there is no debate. New revelations and discoveries are constantly emerging, but they only deepen humanity’s understanding of the natural origins of COVID-19 and the dangers posed by other animal-borne diseases to modern society.

The findings by the French and Laotian scientists refute the “lab leak” conspiracy theory, according to which scientists performed “gain of function” experiments on naturally occurring viruses in order to make them more infectious to humans, then released them, inadvertently or deliberately, into the city of Wuhan, China.

Nicholas Wade, the advocate of racist pseudoscience whose claims about a “lab leak” were cited uncritically by every major US newspaper, claimed that the RBD of SARS-CoV-2 “seemed optimized for the human receptor,” leading to the conclusion that “the virus might have been generated in a laboratory.”

But now a very similar RBD, with apparently the same capacity to infect humans, has been found in nature.

As scientists scour the bat caves of Indochina for potential predecessors of SARS-CoV-2, they are homing in, less than two years into the pandemic, on what for SARS took a decade and a half to discover—the

specific natural origin of the virus.

In 2017, *Nature* reported, “In a remote cave in Yunnan province, virologists have identified a single population of horseshoe bats that harbours virus strains with all the genetic building blocks of the one that jumped to humans in 2002, killing almost 800 people around the world.”

The journal continued, “Although no single bat had the exact strain of SARS coronavirus that is found in humans, the analysis showed that the strains mix often.”

The author of the 2017 study, Shi Zhengli, has been falsely and absurdly demonized by the US media as having created the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, she warned in 2017 that “The risk of spillover into people and emergence of a disease similar to SARS is possible,” and urged measures to control the spread of animal diseases in humans.

The authors of this month’s study note that, like the 2017 breakthrough that led to the identification of the origins of SARS, proof of the origins of SARS-CoV-2 may come in the form of finding individual pieces of the virus that may have arisen through recombination or “mosaicism.”

They write, “Although the identification of SARS-CoV-2 in bats is a major goal, it may be unattainable. A more realistic objective is to identify the sequences that contribute to its mosaicism.”

Of all the major English-language publications, only the UK-based *Telegraph* has reported the breakthrough discovery. This report, along with other findings pointing to the widespread prevalence of bat coronaviruses and their ability to infect human beings, have gone unreported by the same newspapers that gave breathless credence to the fabrications of Nicholas Wade.

The latest scientific findings, combined with the admission last month by most of the US intelligence agencies that SARS-CoV-2 was “not genetically engineered,” should put the final nail in the coffin of the Wuhan Lab conspiracy theory. Those newspapers and writers that promoted this conspiracy theory owe the world a public explanation and apology.

But none will be forthcoming, because the advocates of the “Wuhan lab” theory are serving definite class interests. Their shameless lies, using bogus pseudoscience, aim to further a right-wing, xenophobic,

and racist campaign to demonize China, laying the ideological groundwork for imperialist war.



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