

French anti-lockdown professor investigated for illegal experimentation

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8 November 2021

The French news website Médiapart has published information from French health authorities implicating the medical researcher based in Marseille, Didier Raoult. According to Médiapart, Raoult conducted unapproved experiments in the course of a tuberculosis treatment trial, causing serious medical complications in several patients.

The publication of these claims comes as Raoult is due to appear before a disciplinary hearing of the Order of Physicians, accused of breaching the professional code of ethics.

These revelations implicate not only Raoult, but multiple governments that attempted to use him to justify their health policies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Brazil's fascist president, Jair Bolsonaro, now accused by a parliamentary commission of mass murder for permitting the coronavirus to spread, cited Raoult to justify his promotion of hydroxychloroquine, a drug with no proven effectiveness against the virus. French President Emmanuel Macron has worked with Raoult to try to justify his policy of "living with the virus" that has killed 1.3 million people in Europe.

The serious accusations against Raoult further discredit the anti-scientific policy of mass death pursued by the ruling elite throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Médiapart, several alerts about the treatment of tuberculosis at the Mediterranean University Hospital Infection Institute, directed by Raoult in Marseille, were sent to the National Reference Center at the Pitié-Salpêtrière hospital in Paris. The latter notified the French Society of Infectious Pathology, which asked Raoult to cease his procedure in November 2019.

Already in August 2019, the National Agency for Medication Security (ANSM) had received a request from Raoult's IHU for authorization to conduct the study. The ANSM reportedly responded by sending a document with a series of questions probing the usefulness and rationale of the study. The Public Hospital of Marseille (AP-HM)

relayed the ANSM's decision.

In view of "the notable inadequacies of the dossier, raising numerous questions about the justification of the study, with regard to the safety of the research participants and their follow-up procedures," the AP-HM informed the IHU of "its decision to withdraw its application for clinical trial authorization on September 26, 2019. This research was therefore not authorized," the ANSM told Médiapart.

Nevertheless, these treatments continued until very recently, according to information from Médiapart. Médiapart journalist Pascale Pascariello also revealed that several patients enrolled in the experiment were living in precarious conditions, either as migrants or homeless. People who do not speak French "did not necessarily know that it was an unauthorized trial that was being administered," she said.

In France, the treatment to cure tuberculosis involves a combination of four antibiotics recommended by national and international health authorities and by the WHO for six months.

However, "among the four antibiotics given by Didier Raoult," two (sulfadiazine and minocycline) do not appear in this list approved by the authorities, and "have not proven their effectiveness at all, not even on animals," Pascale Pascariello noted. Sulfadiazine has a significant renal toxicity, which could explain the severe side effects observed in some patients.

According to Médiapart, three participants in the trial had to undergo emergency surgery because of this side effect, including a 17-year-old minor.

An internal investigation has been conducted by the AP-HM, and the ANSM has referred the matter to the public prosecutor for several studies conducted at the IHU. According to the *Express*, the ANSM will "carry out an investigation into the IHU." It could be joined by the General Inspectorate of Social Affairs, which, according

to France Télévision, has already been officially requested by the Ministry of Health. Violating the legislation on clinical trials is punishable by one year's imprisonment and a fine of €15,000.

Didier Raoult reacted to Médiapart's revelations by tweeting that they were a "storm in a teacup." Raoult, who actively uses social media, broadcast a video entitled "French hostility to research: the example of tuberculosis" which defends the protocol that had been challenged by the health authorities. According to Raoult, health authorities are blocking his attempt to develop a revolutionary treatment for multidrug-resistant tuberculosis.

Reports that Raoult is conducting wild experiments on poor people cast a harsh light on his promotion of hydroxychloroquine. At the beginning of the pandemic he had conducted a small clinical trial, much too small to be demonstrative, which was highly criticised for its design flaws and which ultimately showed no improvement in mortality rates for COVID-19. Despite the lack of demonstrated efficacy, he prescribed hydroxychloroquine en masse throughout the lockdown and continued to promote it for months, despite the warnings of the scientific community. This allowed Trump, Bolsonaro, and other far-right political leaders to fraudulently promote hydroxychloroquine.

Raoult, now presenting himself as an "anti-system" representative, has as his lawyer the far-right activist Fabrice Di Vizio, who is the health adviser for Florian Philippot's neo-fascist Patriots party. Di Vizio regularly appears on the far-right channel CNews of billionaire Vincent Bolloré. He has denounced vaccination and the Macron government's health pass, comparing vaccination to "rape, because it is an act done under duress. ... You are forced to infringe on the integrity of your body."

Di Vizio, who threatened on Twitter to fire an employee for wanting to get vaccinated, is the target of an ethics investigation by the Paris Bar Council.

It is in this degraded and anti-worker environment that Macron, among others, sought advice in order to cover his murderous policy of "living with the virus." Indeed, Raoult was a member of the Scientific Council in France and continued to communicate with the Élysée after he left the Council last year in the midst of the pandemic. He has consistently downplayed the severity of the pandemic and denounced lockdowns, gaining public notoriety and support from a portion of the political establishment, particularly on the right and far right.

At the end of January, 2020, Chinese authorities placed

11 million inhabitants of Wuhan under strict quarantine to contain the epidemic, while the WHO declared a state of international emergency. At this time, French Health Minister Agnes Buzyn privately alerted Macron and Prime Minister Edouard Philippe to the health risk but publicly declared the virus a "flu." Raoult told the *Journal de Dimanche*, "In the age of hyper-reactivity of social media, politicians are afraid of not doing enough, so they sometimes do too much."

In March 2020 the Macron government had to impose a lockdown in the face of a wave of strikes across Europe that started in Italy: workers were demanding the right to shelter at home. Raoult reacted by denouncing the lockdown as a "medieval" decision.

However, in less than two months, the lockdown broke the dynamics of the virus circulation. If the government had continued the lockdown for a few more weeks and then put in place a serious contact tracing service, the virus could have been eliminated from French territory, and even from Europe, if similar policies were adopted elsewhere. But none of this was done. Macron only ended the lockdown to impose a return to normal and the extraction of profits by the banks and the large corporation from the workers herded into workplaces.

Raoult covered up for the botched reopening on May 12, 2020, which came despite WHO warnings of a possible resurgence of the pandemic in Europe. He said the pandemic "is resolving itself. There is no second wave anywhere, this is the normal curve. A few sporadic cases will appear here or there eventually if there is someone super contagious, but all of this no longer reflects an epidemic dynamic. The epidemic is winding down."

In fact, subsequent waves of the pandemic have killed more people than the first.

Now that the Macron government is trying to end health measures against the backdrop of the pandemic's rise across Europe, the Raoult case is a warning to workers. To wage a truly scientific struggle to eliminate the coronavirus, the working class must mobilize against the Macron government, in complete independence from the trade union apparatuses and other political satellites of Macron, and in conscious opposition to far-right demagoguery.



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