

Salvagene SARS CoV-2

Task Force: On 30th March 2021, the WHO Commission of Inquiry issued a statement to the effect that a laboratory accident as the cause of the pandemic was “extremely unlikely”. The skepticism we expressed at the time about their findings is now being vindicated.

KEYNOTE

Dear Premium Customers,

At the time, we came in for considerable criticism for our assessment that the probability of a laboratory accident having released the virus was around 60%, and we were even accused of stirring up a conspiracy theory.

The reevaluation of the surrounding circumstances by U.S. media, leading European scientists and even White House officials is not based on any new evidence, and nothing new has come to light, so we are more than surprised by the traction that the theory is gaining. At the same time, we take quiet satisfaction that our assessment at the time is now considered plausible by professional colleagues and by serious political institutions. What is supposedly new is in fact a republication of an article in the Wall Street Journal from November 2019 concerning three employees at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) who became so seriously ill with cold and flu-like symptoms that they had to be treated in hospital.

Just a fortnight ago, Science magazine published an article and open letter signed by 18 prominent experts calling for the investigation to be reopened. There is no smoking gun pointing to a laboratory leak, just as there is no proof that the virus has a natural origin. Consequently, the authors of the article have plumped for a 50:50 probability, compared with our odds of 60:40 in favor of a laboratory accident. And that is the order of likelihood we are standing by.

The authors of the Science article were stung into action by the official conclusions of the WHO Commission of Enquiry on 30th March 2021 which rated a laboratory accident as "extremely unlikely". We strongly disagreed with that at the time and said so in no uncertain terms. We also expressed the view that this investigation was a farce. Even the WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has now voiced his own criticism, and that is quite astonishing, because ultimately he was the one who authorized the March statement. At the end of the day, it has to be conceded that the commissioners did not have access to raw data while they were in China, including information on previous patient samples from before December 2019, although they were allowed to visit some institutes and the possibility of a laboratory accident was given serious consideration. Tedros now admits that this investigation was inadequate. The mission was severely handicapped by the decision on the part of the Chinese government to "disinvite" colleagues with whom we work very closely, in particular the eminent German scientist Christian Drosten.

The commission itself had considerable internal conflicts of interest in its makeup. The team included Peter Daszak, head of the EcoHealth Alliance, a non-governmental organization that aims to protect health and ecosystems. In any serious investigation of a possible laboratory accident, Daszak would rank among the main suspects, because for many years the American worked together with the Chinese virologist Shi Zheng-Li. Supported by American funding that Daszak helped to source, Shi Zheng-Li was researching the coronaviruses found in bats; he captured them in the nearby caves and brought them to the Wuhan Institute of

Virology over a period of 15 years. The aim of the project was first to clarify the origin of the SARS 1 pandemic and then to find out as much as possible about other potentially dangerous coronaviruses. So, the question arises: could the honorable intention to prevent a pandemic have been the trigger for the one we are now experiencing?

The theory of a laboratory accident is given added credence by the fact that the pandemic started in Wuhan. There is a general consensus that SARS-CoV-2 will originally have developed in horseshoe bats, a species widespread in Southeast Asia. But where did the virus make the crossover to a human or an intermediate host? At first, suspicion fell on a wild animal market in Wuhan. A conspicuously large number of the early patients had spent time there. However, further investigations revealed that there were also many patients among the early cases that had no connection to the animal market. The origin of the pandemic must therefore lie elsewhere. Wuhan is an ultra-modern metropolis, and it is therefore unlikely that its inhabitants naturally come into contact with bats. She Zheng-Li found the closest relative of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in a mine in the southern province of Yunnan – 1,500 kilometers from Wuhan. This is only 86% identical to the novel coronavirus, meaning that decades of separate evolution have elapsed between the two viruses. However, it is conceivable that “patient zero” became infected with SARS-CoV-2 there or at some other location in China before traveling to Wuhan and spreading the virus in the city. However, there is a catch: if a virus jumps from one species to another, it can hardly happen overnight by a single change in the genome. Although an initial mutation can make the transition possible, the virus will at first be poorly adapted to the new host. Many further adaptations are necessary before a virus becomes so contagious that it can trigger a pandemic. In the case of SARS 1, which embarked on a short career as a pandemic in 2002, it has been possible to trace the many transformative steps, some of which involved viverrids as intermediate hosts. Traces of any such adaptation are missing for the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The genetic sequences recorded in the first patients at the end of 2019 are remarkably uniform.

The novel coronavirus seems to have come into the world out of nowhere as an already perfectly formed pathogen. It is possible, of course, that its evolutionary traces have simply not been found so far, or that China is keeping them under wraps. What is striking about SARS-CoV-2 is that, although it is no longer circulating among bats, it can infect various members of the carnivore group, including minks, cats and dogs. It is therefore conceivable that the virus adapted on large fur farms, for example among the fluffy tanuki from which China sources fur trimmings to supply the global fashion industry.

At this point, we have to ask ourselves why, after more than 18 months of mink, cats and dogs becoming infected through human contact, not a single animal-to-human retransmission has been recorded worldwide so far. This is yet another factor indicating a laboratory accident as the more likely cause.

We can pursue the matter further and explore the possibility that the evolution of SARS-CoV-2 took place in a laboratory, presumably at the Wuhan Institute of Virology. Viruses have escaped from such high-security facilities before. In 1977, for example, an unusual flu virus went around the world. It caused mild symptoms, mainly affected people under 26 and its genetic sequence was identical to a variant that last circulated in the 1950s. One possible explanation for this could be that old samples were used in vaccine development, thereby allowing the virus to escape from the laboratory.

There are six recorded cases of the SARS 1 virus having leaked out of laboratories in three countries – Singapore, Taiwan and China. In 2003, for example, a 26-year-old student at the Institute of Virology in Beijing became infected, blithely got on a train and traveled to her hometown 1,000 kilometers away. The student's mother then became infected and subsequently died. The Chinese authorities quarantined around 1,000 people and were able to

contain the outbreak. If SARS-CoV-2 also escaped from a laboratory, however, the question arises as to how it could have originated there in the first place. Various researchers have been looking for clues. The American scientific journalist Likus Walter describes the chain of evidence in particular detail in a report. However, we do not consider most of the points mentioned to be scientifically plausible. He thinks that She Zheng-Li was conducting so-called "gain of function" experiments in Wuhan. In experiments of this kind, virologists combine the component parts of different viruses to create new functions. The viruses can also become more infectious as a result. The intention of such experiments can be inferred from the research proposals submitted. In one case, She Zheng-Li published a successful experiment.

Wuhan has conducted at least one such experiment under the direction of Ralf S. Barec, one of the world's leading coronavirus researchers based at the University of North Carolina. Barec and She Zheng-Li published a paper in Nature magazine in 2015 about a project in which they used the SARS 1 virus as the basic structure and added the spike protein of another coronavirus. The new virus was then able to infect human cells. Significantly, Barec is among the authors in Science magazine calling for a more rigorous investigation of SARS-CoV-2.

Any conclusion we might reach is necessarily subject to revision, because until China makes the data more transparent, all possibilities remain open, but in our view with a laboratory as the marginally more likely explanation. A virus database at the WIV with 22,000 entries was taken offline in September 2019, and initial assurances by some virologists that SARS-CoV-2 could not be a laboratory construct are now considered premature and untenable. As it later turned out, globetrotter Peter Daszak was behind an announcement to this effect that was published in the Lancet in February 2020. At the same time, there are certain features in the gene sequence of SARS-CoV-2 that give rise to speculation about possible human manipulation.

So, the debate is set to continue. The initial reluctance of the scientific community to be drawn into what looked like a conspiracy theory and to appear too close to the Trump administration has proved to be a good thing, as such considerations no longer need to temper or cloud their judgment. However, the view of the Salvagene SARS-CoV-2 Task Force is that the chance of the mystery ever being solved is slim. At the start of 2020, China imposed a gagging order, whereby no one in the country was allowed to say or publish anything about the origin of the virus. Nevertheless, there is a body of evidence to be found outside of China.

We believe that, if more information comes to light, it should be possible to deduce the origin of the pandemic by scientific means. At the same time, it is known that U.S. intelligence agencies, as well as other Western intelligence agencies, are beginning to trawl through human and electronic sources, which may eventually provide the basis for science to get to the bottom of the whole affair.

It is possibly also a matter of significance that the pace of mutation has accelerated in the last fortnight, which is due to the vaccination programs. As we have already pointed out many times before, the virus is forced by the vaccines to activate, adapt and optimize itself by means of escape mutations. Unfortunately, there is very little awareness or acceptance among political leaders that it is precisely the vaccinated population who should be tested because of this issue and that more sequencing should be carried out as part of the tests.

The latest variant to have been detected in Vietnam is ultimately a combination of the British and Indian virus strains. It disperses very quickly through the air, so that the viral load in the throat

increases much faster after infection and thus spreads very strongly in the environment. This makes it much more contagious than the previously known variants. The race between virus mutations and vaccine development goes on...

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