

The Complex Relationship Between NIH and EcoHealth Alliance

**Pamela A. Popper, President
Wellness Forum Health**

It is now apparent that funding for the creation of SARS-CoV-2 was provided by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). Both Fauci (head of NIAID) and former director of NIH Frances Collins have repeatedly denied that their agencies funded any gain-of-function research anywhere, including the Wuhan Institute of Virology. Despite their denials, the lab leak origin of the virus started gaining acceptance by mainstream so-called experts several months ago.

In March, Jeffrey Sachs, chair of the *Lancet* COVID-19 Commission, started telling any podcaster or reporter who would interview him that he had tried diligently to get to the bottom of the origin of the virus, but everyone lied to him, including Peter Daszak (head of EcoHealth Alliance, which received funding from NIH and NIAID). Sachs has stated that it is likely that the virus was produced in a lab and funded by the U.S. government.¹ Even the World Health Organization (WHO), which praised China for its draconian response to COVID-19 and insisted that the Chinese Communist Party was not culpable, has acknowledged the “possibility” that the virus leaked from a lab.²

But the most damning evidence comes from The National Institutes of Health itself. Several congressional committees have held hearings since mid-2021, and several Representatives and Senators have demanded that the NIH produce documents and other information concerning the origin of SARS-CoV-2.

In a letter to Rep James Comer (R-KY) dated October 20, 2021, NIH Deputy Director Lawrence Tabak acknowledged that the NIH had given a grant to EcoHealth Alliance Inc., which then awarded a subgrant to the Wuhan Institute of Virology. In this letter, Tabak stated that EcoHealth’s “limited experiment” looked at whether “spike proteins from naturally occurring bat viruses circulating in China were capable of binding to the ACE2 receptor in a mouse model. According to Tabak, “mice infected with the modified virus became sicker than those who were infected with the unmodified virus.” He wrote, “As sometimes occurs in science, this was an unexpected result of the research, as opposed to something that the researchers set out to do.”³

Tabak added that EcoHealth had failed to submit reports as required under the terms of the grant, and that the NIH had demanded that EcoHealth submit any and all data concerning the experiment conducted under the NIH grant within five days of October 20, 2021. He wrote that “Additional compliance efforts continue.”⁴

A letter dated Oct 27 2021 from Congressional leaders to Frances Collins, (former) Director of the National Institutes of Health, concerned inadequate oversight of grants

made from NIH to EcoHealth Alliance. Some of the concerns arose from a bipartisan “in camera” review of documents that took place at the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The documents were examined in chambers because the NIH refused to make them available for public view.

The letter asked NIH to be transparent about its relationship with EcoHealth Alliance and specifically requested documents related to a 2014 grant to EcoHealth, and money from this grant which was funneled to the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV). This grant was in addition to funding EcoHealth received from NIAID, Fauci’s agency, some of which was also funneled to the WIV.⁵

The letter describes just some of the interactions between NIH and EcoHealth and included these details:

NIH terminated an EcoHealth Alliance grant in April 2020, reinstated the grant, and then suspended it in July 2020 due to EcoHealth’s inadequate oversight of research at the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

EcoHealth Alliance refused to provide information to the NIH related to its subaward to the Wuhan Institute of Virology. In spite of this non-compliance, NIH gave another \$369,819 to EcoHealth on July 13 2020, just 5 days after the suspension.

NIH failed to report EcoHealth’s noncompliance and grant suspension to a database that alerts other U.S. Government agencies about risky grant recipients.⁶

Both Daszak and officials at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases knew that EcoHealth’s research was crossing the line in consideration of the moratorium on gain-of-function research. In 2016 EcoHealth proposed a research project with the WIV that involved testing chimeric viruses using humanized mice to determine if the viruses could infect human cells.

Subsequently two NIH staff members, Jenny Greer and Erik Stemmy, wrote to EcoHealth, stating that the proposal appeared “to involve research covered under the pause.” They asked Daszak to provide additional information concerning how EcoHealth would conduct the research without violating the pause within 15 days and stated that funding would be withheld until the information was received.⁷

Daszak replied and asserted that the organization’s research did not involve gain of function: “These 2 chimeric bat-like CoVs were constructed on Sept. 24, 2015. They use the backbone of one virus, and the spike proteins of two newly discovered bat viruses. The construction of these chimeric viruses aims to understand the receptor usage and infectivity of bat viruses that may be progenitors of SARS-CoV. We have not yet tested the pathogenicity of these viruses in animals.”⁸

Daszak stated that this work would not be considered GoF because "...the pause specifically targeted experiments that related to the pathogenicity or transmissibility of SARS-CoV, MERS CoV and any influenza virus. Our molecular clone is WIV1, which is a group 2b SARS-like bat coronavirus that has never been demonstrated to infect humans or cause human disease." But this was not true.

Gain of function research funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the National Institute of Aging of the NIH had resulted in the conclusion that WIV1 was known to be potentially dangerous to humans. An article published in a prestigious journal reporting this research concluded:

"...that the virus has significant pathogenic potential."⁹

AND

"...the WIV1-CoV cluster has been identified as a threat for future emergence in human populations due to robust replication in primary human airway epithelial cell cultures."¹⁰

In order to keep the money flowing from NIAID, Daszak proposed that Daszak/EcoHealth and its collaborators would immediately stop their research and inform their NIAID program officer if the chimeras showed evidence of virus growth greater than 1 log (or 10 times) the growth rate of the original viruses and/or grew more efficiently in human lung cells.

Ignoring obvious warning signs, NIAID agreed with EcoHealth's self-assessment and agreed to let EcoHealth police its own activities.

The NIAID added the following award condition, per the grant documents (NOTE: this is almost the identical language proposed by Daszak to NIAID):

NIAID acknowledges that if any of the MERS-like or SARS-like chimeras generated under this grant show **evidence of enhanced virus growth greater than 1 log over the parental backbone strain**, Dr. Daszak will immediately stop all experiments w/ these viruses and provide the NIAID Program Officer and Grants Management Specialist, and Wuhan Institute of Virology Institutional Biosafety Committee, with the relevant data and information related to these unanticipated outcomes. (Emphasis added).¹¹

Daszak and EcoHealth did not do what they promised. Sometime during the period June 2017-May 31 2018, EcoHealth and the Wuhan Institute of Virology infected humanized mice with the WIV1 parental virus and three chimeric viruses. The virus grew at rate 10,000 times greater than the parent virus. Mice lost 20% of their body weight in six days.¹²

At day two and four, "Viral loads in lung tissues of mice challenged with all three chimeras reached $>10^6$ genome copies per/g, significantly higher than related WIV1

infection (Fig. 6b). This demonstrates that pathogenicity of SARS-related coronaviruses in humanized mice differs with divergent S proteins, confirming the value of this model in assessing novel SARS related coronavirus pathogenicity.”¹³

In spite of running two years behind in submitting required reports to NIH, and the failure of EcoHealth to stop the experiments and report to NIAID as promised, NIH approved the renewal of EcoHealth’s grant on June 18 2018. In its November 5 2018 progress report to NIH for the period of June 1 2014 through May 31 2019, EcoHealth reported that the strains of viruses it was using could represent a significant threat to public health because they could escape existing vaccine and therapeutic treatments.¹⁴

Even more shocking: On September 21 2022, a new grant was awarded by The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases to EcoHealth Alliance. The title of the grant is “Analyzing the potential for future bat coronavirus emergence in Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam.”¹⁵

The bottom line:

The NIH and Fauci’s agency *did* provide funding for gain of function research that was conducted by EcoHealth and the Wuhan Institute of Virology

EcoHealth has a terrible track record – the organization lied about its activities and failed to file reports as required under the terms of its grants.

Fauci’s agency continues to fund EcoHealth – today! And EcoHealth continues to conduct gain-of function research – today!

¹ Harrison NL, Sachs JD. “A call for an independent inquiry into the origin of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.” *PNAS* 2022 May;119(21):e2202769119

² Scientific Advisory Group for the Origin of Novel Pathogens (SAGO). Preliminary Report of the SAGO. 9 June 2022 https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/scientific-advisory-group-on-the-origins-of-novel-pathogens/sago-report-09062022.pdf?sfvrsn=42b55bbc_1&download=true accessed 11.5.2022

³ Emily Crane. NIH admits US funded gain-of-function in Wuhan – despite Fauci’s denials. *New York Post* Oct 21 2021 <https://nypost.com/2021/10/21/nih-admits-us-funded-gain-of-function-in-wuhan-despite-faucis-repeated-denials/> accessed 9.10.2022

⁴ IBID

⁵ <https://republicans-energycommerce.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021.10.27-Letter-to-NIH.pdf>

⁶ IBID

⁷ Sharon Lerner, Mara Hvistendahl. NIH Officials Worked With EcoHealth Alliance to Evade Restrictions on Coronavirus Experiments. *The Intercept* Nov 3 2021 <https://theintercept.com/2021/11/03/coronavirus-research-ecohealth-nih-emails/>

⁸ <https://republicans-energycommerce.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021.10.27-Letter-to-NIH.pdf>

⁹ Menachery VD, Yount BL, Sims AC et al. “SARS-like W1V1-CoV poised for human emergence.” *PNAS* 2016 Mar;113(11):3048-3053

¹⁰ IBID

¹¹ <https://republicans-energycommerce.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021.10.27-Letter-to-NIH.pdf>

¹² Andrew Kerr. Fauci-Funded Wuhan Lab Viruses Exhibited Over 10,000 Times Higher Viral Load Than Natural Strain, Documents Show. *Daily Caller* Sept 9 2021

¹³ <https://republicans-energycommerce.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021.10.27-Letter-to-NIH.pdf>

¹⁴ IBID

¹⁵ https://reporter.nih.gov/search/DKCQxd3djUSwa0pi_hvk2A/project-details/10522470