



Why Stopping the Deregulation of
Biotechnology Matters So Much

Hatchard Report

Dr. Guy Hatchard

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In October 2012, Dr Anthony Fauci was [writing for the American Society for Microbiology](#) about scientists conducting gain of function research:

“In an unlikely but conceivable turn of events, what if that scientist becomes infected with the virus which leads to an outbreak and ultimately triggers a pandemic? Many ask reasonable questions: Given the possibility of such scenarios, however remote – should the initial experiments have been performed and/or published in the first place, and what were the processes involved in this decision? Scientists working in this field might say – as indeed I have said – that the benefits of such experiments and the resulting knowledge outweigh the risks”.



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Dr. Fauci was Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) charged with preventing infectious disease, but he was arguing in support of scientists at the University of Wisconsin and the Erasmus University Medical Centre in the Netherlands who were engineering H1N5 avian influenza (bird flu) to be able to pass between mammals carried by respiratory droplets.

Encouraged by Dr Fauci, an international technical consultation convened by the WHO concluded that this work was an important contribution to public health surveillance of H5N1 viruses. The European Academies of Science Advisory Council (EASAC) concluded that all required laws, rules, regulations, and codes of conduct are in place in several EU countries to continue this type of work responsibly. The regulations in the US were almost non-existent. Biotechnology experimentation was largely unregulated, guided only by voluntary arrangements and commitments made between researchers. Leading biotech advocates and researchers like Dr Fauci wanted to make sure this lax situation continued.

You can see the parallels between this fateful historical misstep and the debate currently going on in New Zealand about biotechnology deregulation. I am using the term ‘debate’ rather loosely here, mainstream media has reported a very one sided rosy picture of our biotechnology future. Our scientists seem to be channeling the reckless disregard for public health contained in the 2012 Fauci remarks. What could possibly go wrong?

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We are standing on the threshold of a biotechnology future fraught with extreme risk and the biotech fraternity is determined that nothing and no one shall stand in the way. Their bottom line at this time is that no one should believe that COVID-19 came from the lab. You may be aware of a range of articles that circulated widely around the globe based on a paper entitled [“Genetic tracing of market wildlife and viruses at the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic](#) published in the journal Cell. The NZ Herald headlined [“Covid-19: Scientists Narrow Down List of Pandemic Sparking Animals”](#). This wrongly described the Cell article as containing new evidence that bolstered the likelihood that Covid came from the Wuhan Wet Market, rather than a lab.

What the article didn't tell readers is that one of the lead authors of this paper [Kristian Andersen was involved in the now discredited early attempts to dismiss the lab leak theory](#) while also applying for a \$8.9 million grant from NIH awaiting approval on Dr. Fauci's desk. Andersen told the BBC last week that it is *“beyond reasonable doubt”* that the COVID-19 pandemic started with infected animals. Don't be fooled a second time.

The [UK Daily Telegraph blew the whistle](#) on this latest attempt to bamboozle the public into accepting the wet market theory. The Telegraph revealed it as a ruse to enable the biotech industry to escape regulation. The findings reported in Cell do not show that COVID-19 came from Raccoon Dogs or any other animal in Wuhan. They did not find any COVID-19 infected animal in the Wuhan market, nor any market vendor who caught COVID-19 from an animal – the bare minimum to establish any kind of connection between animals and human COVID-19.

“The new paper's reasoning demands that a single infected raccoon dog somehow souped up a bat virus enough to spark a global human pandemic without sparking even a single other case among, er, raccoon dogs – and then vanished into thin air.”

Moreover, the paper's analysis relies on a November-December 2019 start date for COVID-19 infection, which excludes now confirmed cases which began some weeks earlier. The Telegraph article summarises:

“The lab was doing risky experiments that made bat viruses more infectious in the years leading up to the pandemic. It had a reputation for being unsafe. It was planning to switch its focus to viruses precisely like this one the year before the pandemic. It worked on a close relative of SARS-CoV-2 in 2018. It was party to a plan to insert a special feature into a virus's spike gene, a feature found uniquely in the virus that caused the pandemic.”

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Leading independent scientists agree that the market theory is still highly implausible, such as George Gao, the man who led the investigation of the wet market, Ralph Baric, the world's leading corona virologist, molecular biologist Professor Richard E. Ebright, evolutionary biologist Alex Washburne and many, many others. We have discussed these issues before in our article "[A New Beginning or a Sudden End?](#)" or try the New York Times "[Why the Pandemic Probably Started in a Lab, in 5 Key Points](#)".

Those biotech scientists rubbing their hands with glee at the prospect of fat grants and a free hand to play God are not going to stop pushing the Wet Market theory, however implausible it seems, because their reputation and livelihood depends on it. If COVID-19 came from a lab, it is a natural step to ask why is our government deregulating and legitimising biotechnology experimentation? In that case, the five long years of the pandemic spreading around the world, seemingly without limit, point to an alarming conclusion, biotechnology experimentation is not just risky, it is very dangerous and a threat to our very existence. But as Dr Fauci argued in 2012, why should we let public health stand in our way?

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