

## Science Facts and Fallacies Podcast: COVID's mysterious origins; Why some anti-vaxxers got their shots; Unwise J&J 'pause'?



Where did SARS-COV-2 come from? For most of the last year a natural origin story was the predominant view among experts. But the situation isn't so clear today. Why did some vaccine skeptics end up getting their COVID shots? And could their stories help expand vaccine uptake moving forward? With the benefit of hindsight, what can we say about the now-infamous J&J vaccine "pause" in April?

**Join GLP contributor Cameron English and guest host Ally Kennedy on this episode of Science Facts and Fallacies as they break down these latest news stories:**

- [Debating the possible origins of COVID-19: A lab-escaped bioweapon? Animal poop? Random mutations of an existing virus?](#)

Considered a conspiracy theory just a year ago, the possibility that SARS-COV-2 was leaked from a laboratory is now a serious hypothesis, alongside the idea that the virus naturally evolved and jumped from other animals to humans. This status change for the so-called "laboratory spillover" explanation was prompted by a [China–WHO joint study](#) released in early 2021. The 313-page investigation dedicated just four pages to the possibility of a lab accident, prompting 16 scientists to call for a more thorough examination of how [the virus arose](#):

We must take hypotheses about both natural and laboratory spillovers seriously until we have sufficient data. A proper investigation should be transparent, objective, data-driven, inclusive of broad expertise, subject to independent oversight, and responsibly managed to minimize the impact of conflicts of interest. Public health agencies and research laboratories alike need to open their records to the public.

- [Making the leap from 'no' to 'yes': Here's why some vaccine hesitators decided to get a shot](#)

Why do some vaccine-hesitant Americans ultimately get their COVID shots? For some it's a simple matter of getting to attend baseball games again, while others worry that they won't be able to care for their children if they get infected. Whatever their motivations, their stories could offer insights to public health officials eager to convince even more vaccine skeptics to come around.

Follow the latest news and policy debates on sustainable agriculture, biomedicine, and other 'disruptive' innovations. Subscribe to our newsletter.

[SIGN UP](#)

- [Scientifically questionable 10-day pause of J&J vaccine has deepened hesitancy](#)

The CDC's and FDA's decision to pause distribution of Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 shot had a [noticeable impact](#) on vaccine uptake. Moreover, immunization skeptics used the confusing messaging (if

the shot is safe, why “pause” it?) to spur their cause, creating a sort of negative feedback loop of vaccine hesitancy. Was the pause necessary, and what can we learn from the ensuing controversy before we face new infectious disease threats in the future?

**Ally Kennedy** is a premedical student at the University of Florida. She has a particular interest in infectious disease, pain neurology—and more recently, COVID-19. Visit [her website](#) and follow her on Twitter [@AllyAnswers](#)

**Cameron J. English** is the director of bio-sciences at the [American Council on Science and Health](#). Follow him on Twitter [@camjenglish](#)