

It all started in Italy? Latest COVID origin theory explodes on the web

In early August 2021, a [preprint](#) reported a potentially huge discovery. Researchers had looked at samples that were collected as part of measles and rubella surveillance in Italy.

They reported the detection of evidence of Sars-CoV-2 genetic material in the samples of eleven subjects taken before the pandemic – with the earliest case going as far back as late summer 2019.

This would mean that the virus was circulating in Italy much earlier than December 8, thought to be the date of the [first known case in Wuhan](#).

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

[SIGN UP](#)

There’s just one problem: all of this science could be riddled with mistakes.

To get their data, the researchers amplified tiny amounts of RNA or DNA in a sample. But the approach is highly susceptible to contamination and notorious for generating false positives.

...

“Any antibody test has its false positives, so when you screen a group of individuals in a very low prevalence situation, the majority of positives are going to be false,” says [virologist] Marion Koopmans.

...

Some scientists are arguing the theory shouldn’t be discounted just yet, and that the sheer number of papers is worth investigating further, at the very least. “We cannot get around that there are now several pointers from northern Italy,” says Koopmans.

[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.](#)