

Viewpoint: Why the COVID-19 lab leak theory refuses to die

Ever since the coronavirus now known as SARS-CoV-2 was first identified as the cause of an outbreak of a mysterious severe viral pneumonia in Wuhan, China two and a half years ago, a disease that later spread to the rest of the world as the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been intense curiosity about the origins of the virus.

The most plausible hypothesis was that, like many diseases before, SARS-CoV-2 had a zoonotic origin; i.e., it developed the ability to “jump” from an animal reservoir to humans.

Far less plausible, albeit not impossible, was the hypothesis that the novel coronavirus was created in a laboratory and then escaped, either through incompetence or malfeasance, a hypothesis that became more colloquially known as the “lab leak” hypothesis.

Last week, two papers were finally published that, under normal circumstances, would be, if not the final nails in the coffin of the lab leak hypothesis, getting very close, were published in Science, one examining the [molecular epidemiology of SARS-CoV-2](#) and the other demonstrating that the wet market in Wuhan was indeed an [early epicenter of the pandemic](#). Let’s just say that, contrary to the assertions of some optimists, these studies haven’t made much of an impact on conspiracy theorists, other than to provide them with targets to try to discredit.

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While lab leak proponents are correct that current studies don’t absolutely rule out a lab leak hypothesis, when they are taken together with existing evidence, they do deliver blows to lab leak so devastating that the hypothesis should be considered dead until and unless proponents can produce evidence sufficiently compelling to persuade scientists to resurrect it.

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