

RE: A Statement in support of the scientists, public health and medical professionals of China

Subject: RE: A Statement in support of the scientists, public health and medical professionals of China
From: Peter Daszak <daszak@ecohealthalliance.org>
To: Saif, Linda <saif.2@osu.edu>, Hume Field <hume.field@ecohealthalliance.org>
Cc: JMHUGHE@emory.edu <jmhughe@emory.edu>, Rita Colwell <[REDACTED]>
Rita Colwell <rcolwell@g.umd.edu>, rcolwell@umd.edu, Alison Andre
<andre@ecohealthalliance.org>, Aleksei Chmura <chmura@ecohealthalliance.org>,
Hongying Li <li@ecohealthalliance.org>, William B. Karesh <karesh@ecohealthalliance.org>,
Robert Kessler <kessler@ecohealthalliance.org>
Sent: February 6, 2020 10:23:12 PM EST
Attachments: Statement of support 2019nCoV China Final.docx

Thank you very much Linda, Jim, Billy and Hume for signing on to this rapidly. Rita called today but was in a meeting and we haven't had time to talk, but I'll make sure we connect tomorrow.

Hume – I've taken some of your comments and lightly edited, and I've attached the revised version here. Linda – you're right it would be good to be specific about the bioengineered virus conspiracy theory, but we I think we should probably stick to a broad statement. The Presidents of the US National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine have drafted a letter that I expect will be released Friday or Monday. I've not seen the final version yet, but the draft version that we (and expert group that met last week) edited has the following sentence: "The initial views of the experts is that the available genomic data are consistent with natural evolution and that there is currently no evidence that the virus was engineered to spread more quickly among humans." I think this is a bit too specific, because there are other conspiracy theories out there.

Our current statment neatly refutes most of them by saying that "We stand together to strongly condemn conspiracy theories suggesting that 2019-nCoV does not have a natural origin. Scientific evidence overwhelmingly suggests that this virus originated in wildlife, as have so many other emerging diseases". Let me know if you want to change specific wording using 'track changes' above.

The plans now are to wait for Rita to give a Yes or No, then include a reference to the NASEM letter when that comes out, then circulate to some other eminent scientists. I've come up with an initial list below.

Please suggest names of your colleagues that you think might also be willing to support this (I'm sure some of these people are too busy right now to respond):

Dr. Rob Grenfell, Health Director, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
Dr. W. Ian Lipkin, Professor, Columbia University
Dr. Christian Drosten, Professor, German Center for Infection Research
Dr. Juan Lubroth, Chief Veterinary Officer, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Dr. Malik Peiris, Professor, The University of Hong Kong
Dr. Leo Poon, Professor, The University of Hong Kong
Dr. Keiji Fukuda, Professor, The University of Hong Kong
Dr. Jeremy Farrar, Director, The Wellcome Trust
Dr. Richard Hatchett, Chief Executive Officer, Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)
Dr. Richard Webby, Director, World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Studies on the Ecology of Influenza in Animals and Birds
Dr. Peter Palese, Professor & Head, Dept Microbiology, Icahn School of Medicine, Mt Sinai Hospital
Dr. John Mackenzie, Professor Emeritus, Curtin University
Dato' Prof. Lam Sai Kit, University of Malaya
Dr. Stanley Perlman, University of Iowa, Carver College of Medicine
Dr. Larry Madoff, Editor, ProMED-mail

Once we've got a good group of around 20 well-known people, I will then circulate this via social media and email, with a link to a webserver for others in the greater science community (and interested public) to sign on to this statement. I will then present this to the ISID meeting in KL, Malaysia in 2 weeks and I think we'll get a big impact from that community and it should then take off.

Please note that this statement will not have EcoHealth Alliance logo on it and will not be identifiable as coming from any one organization or person, the idea is to have this as a community supporting our colleagues.

Cheers,

Peter

Peter Daszak
President