Twitter Thread by Alina Chan

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@Ayjchan

Dominic Dwyer, a member of the WHO team, on whether the covid virus could've originated from a lab accident: “Now, whether we were shown everything? You can never know. The group wasn’t designed to go and do a forensic examination of lab

WHO team chatted w Wuhan scientists, voted if lab origins were likely. This doesn't count as an investigation into #laborigins I hope @WHO knows that. "you don't want to jump to a conclusion based on several hours of conversation with Chinese scientists"
https://t.co/LLqQixfvZY

Jesse Bloom, virologist @fredhutch "surprised to see some members of the team dismiss the accidental lab leak theory while seeming to suggest, without any specific evidence, the possibility that frozen food might have played a role."
https://t.co/LLqQixfvZY

I was also very surprised to hear this dismissal of #laborigins (in favor of #popsicleorigins) because when @mattwridley and I co-wrote this @WSJ article, we were told...
https://t.co/wXqfSWSDTX?

> The WHO team includes experts who traced the origins of Ebola and MERS outbreaks, but critics are concerned that it doesn’t have the expertise for an investigation that would examine possible lab origins. Dr. David Relman of Stanford University, who raised the possibility early on that the virus might have leaked from a lab, told us: “Based on the scant information that has been shared publicly about the WHO investigation, it doesn’t appear that WHO has adequately represented the range of views and perspectives of key stakeholders or incorporated all needed forms of expertise.” Responding to whether the WHO team will investigate lab origins, Dr. Peter Ben Embarek, the leader of the team, told us, “If our studies point to a possible lab accident, then other international mechanisms would be involved to document such an event. It would take time and additional types of expertise.”

Was this team equipped with the correct expertise to investigate a lab leak origin of covid-19? Did they follow any protocol to investigate #laborigins properly and independently?

If they were not and did not, then how can they rule out lab origins now?

Please don't tell me this was the investigative process for determining whether your studies (btw not independent but based on evidence from Chinese scientists 1-year post outbreak) could point to whether a lab accident could've been the #originsofcovid
https://t.co/4MWolwJOWm

> 3min interview of Peter Daszak who is in the @who #originsofcovid team. What he said conflicts with what @Peterfoodsafety told me prior to the trip: this team did not have the correct expertise for #laborigins, and a new team would be set up if a lab leak had to be investigated. https://t.co/Jjz5lULvlG
>
> — Alina Chan (@Ayjchan) February 10, 2021

I'm not an expert on how international investigations are done. But does this look like an appropriate protocol for investigating #laborigins to anyone? Was this same protocol used for deciding whether to investigate frozen foods as the origins of the virus? #popsicleorigins



And when the team asked to test blood samples in autumn 2019 around Hubei province, "Chinese authorities said they hadn't yet obtained necessary permissions to test samples" I guess that's it then. No way to find out when SARS2 started in Wuhan/Hubei.
https://t.co/VDNqpk3zzo



I'm having a hard time trying to see what the @WHO and international community got out of this investigation. Did we get any independently verified data?

And now WHO will investigate origins in other countries and frozen■ based on what Chinese scientists told them.



Perfect. Great clarification on #originsofcovid investigation by the @WHO in their Member States briefing this morning:

"I want to clarify that all hypotheses remain open and require further study."

https://t.co/k4o6eVNV6d

@WHO essentially obliterated their close to 3 hours long presser in China with a single sentence.

I insist @WHO deliver a similar 3h presser (with Chinese translation) to explain why your statements from inside China require clarification or revision.

https://t.co/k4o6eVNV6d

Any credible #COVID19 investigation (independent or not) looking into #popsicleorigins based on zero well-documented frozen■-acquired human SARS virus infections, should also be looking into #laborigins based on several well-documented lab-acquired human SARS virus infections.

Public service: today's WHO press meeting to answer questions about #originsofcovid among other topics can be found here.
https://t.co/PASnhkaVVe

At around the -57min mark, @DrTedros clarified that while all hypotheses remain open to further study, some are outside the scope of this @WHO #originsofcovid mission.

In response to @washingtonpost question about this scope, Dr Tedros suggests that more experts can be added...

... but there isn't any clarity on whether #laborigins are within the scope and whether @WHO will assemble a new team to investigate it. What they told us at the Chinese presser was that they will not be investigating lab incident hypotheses.
https://t.co/1YLJiXOpED

01:13:18

There we are making the difference between the introduction of the virus into the human population and the possibility of the circulation of the virus through long-distance and through different settings or the introduction of the virus into a particular setting like a market for example.

Then the hypothesis of a direct spill-over from an original animal source into the human population is also a possible pathway and is also generating recommendation for future studies.

However, the findings suggest that the laboratory incident hypothesis is extremely unlikely to explain introduction of the virus into the human population and therefore is not a hypothesis that will imply to suggest future studies into our work to support our future work into the understanding of the origin of the virus.

So this discussion on the different hypotheses and how they will help us direct our future studies was extremely helpful and we have been able to then develop a series of recommendations for future studies, future work in line with the plan we had outlined last July in the terms of reference for how we would go about understanding the origin of the virus and what type of sequence in the studies that would be needed was developed. So the plan we developed in July 2020 is still valid. It has been extremely helpful in guiding our work and the recommendations we are making at the end of these missions are in line with that approach.

-26min mark @WHO is asked about the 90 possible covid cases in Wuhan in Oct 2019 raised by @WSJ but @MarionKoopmans said it was too late to test for antibodies in these people; investigation must turn to banked blood samples under negotiation with China...
https://t.co/VDNqpjLYaO

The seeming disinterest of Chinese authorities in tracking down origins of a virus that 1st broke out in their own city in late 2019 continues to surprise me.

Analyzing banked samples is one of the 1st things to do to figure out when SARS2 emerged. Other countries have done so.

I told @Minervanett @Akselfrids “I find inconceivable that the Chinese government would be unable to obtain permission from its citizens to test early blood samples for traces of Covid-19”
https://t.co/De1bNsrQX8

"WHO team wasn’t allowed to view the raw underlying data on those retrospective studies, which could allow them to conduct their own analysis on how early and how extensively the virus began to spread in China"
https://t.co/vSm9if9XZi

Very interested to understand what the excuse was for not sharing the raw data after all of these international experts had made their way into China after half a year of bartering China-approved team membership and terms of reference.

> The refusal of the Chinese authorities to provide raw, personalized data on the 174 early Covid-19 cases, and on potential earlier cases such as pneumonia patients in the months before December 2019, led to heated discussions between the WHO team and their Chinese counterparts during the mission, said Dr. Dwyer.
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> “Sometimes emotions have run really high,” Thea Fischer, a Danish epidemiologist among the WHO investigators, said on Tuesday. “I am a scientist and I trust data. I trust documented evidence based on data, I don’t just trust what anyone tells me.”