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'We Need More Details': Fauci Emailed Collins About Chinese Laboratory Before Secret Call

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Dr. [Anthony Fauci](#) messaged his boss in early 2020 about work done at a Chinese laboratory that received funding from the U.S. government, a newly disclosed email shows.

Dr. Francis Collins, at the time the director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), sent Fauci a preprint study ([pdf](#)) from Zhengli Shi, a top researcher at the [Wuhan](#) Institute of Virology, a high-level laboratory located in the same city in which the first cases of COVID-19 were

reported.

“In case you haven’t seen this preprint from one week ago,” Collins wrote in the email, dated Feb. 1, 2020. “No evidence this work was supported by NIH.”

The email contained passages that were redacted under an exception to a federal transparency law that allows withholding “inter-agency or intra-agency memorandums or letters which would not be available by law to a party other than an agency in litigation with the agency.”

“I did see it, but did not check the similarities. Obviously we need more details,” Fauci told Collins.

Shi had been studying bat coronaviruses, including one called RaTG13. That coronavirus was 96 percent similar to the COVID-19 virus, according to the preprint.

Shi and her lab received funding from the NIH through an intermediary nonprofit called the

EcoHealth Alliance.

The new email ([pdf](#)) was obtained and released by the nonprofit U.S. Right to Know through a Freedom of Information Act request.

Hours later, both Collins and Fauci joined a private call with top scientists, many of whom later went on to write a paper claiming there was scant evidence that the COVID-19 virus came from the Wuhan lab even though [they told Fauci](#) that the virus likely did not have a natural origin.

“It was a very productive back-and-forth conversation where some on the call felt it could possibly be an engineered virus,” Fauci later [told USA Today](#).

Fauci has repeatedly said he thinks the virus started naturally.

On the call, scientists discussed the similarities between the bat coronavirus studied in Wuhan and the COVID-19 virus, according to notes released by Republican lawmakers ([pdf](#)).

Fauci recommended all of the scientists on the call to the World Health Organization for a panel the group was forming to investigate the origins of the virus, according to the newly disclosed emails.

Fauci and Collins have also said that the U.S. government did not fund so-called gain of function research at the Wuhan lab, or research that increases a pathogen's transmissibility or severity.

But at least one experiment conducted there did increase the severity of a virus, the NIH [revealed in 2021](#). Experts said it met the definition of gain of function.

The NIH in August [ended a subgrant](#) to the Wuhan lab over a refusal to hand over documents, but is allowing EcoHealth to make changes to continue receiving the funding.





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