

JULY 08, 2021 | JUDICIAL WATCH

# Judicial Watch: New Documents Show Wuhan Lab Asked NIH Official for Information on Disinfectants; Nine Fauci Agency Grants for EcoHealth Bat Coronavirus Research



(Washington, DC) Judicial Watch announced today that it received **301 pages** of emails and other records from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) officials in connection with the Wuhan Institute of Virology in

Wuhan, China, revealing significant collaborations and funding that began in 2014. These new records reveal that NIAID gave nine China-related grants to [EcoHealth Alliance](#) to research coronavirus emergence in bats and was the National Institute of Health's (NIH) top issuer of grants to the Wuhan lab itself.

These records also include an email from the Vice Director of the Wuhan Lab asking an NIH official for help finding disinfectants for decontamination of airtight suits and indoor surfaces.

Additionally, a World Health Day announcement lists "successful activities" of the US-China collaboration that included "detailed surveillance throughout China and in other countries on the emergence of coronaviruses" and NIH's receipt of influenza samples from China to "assess risks associated with emerging variants for pandemic and zoonotic threat."

The records further show that, in 2018, [Dr. Ping Chen](#), the NIAID Representative in China, learned of a "type of new flu vaccine using nano-technology from China's Wuhan Institute of Virology" and discovered that the Chinese had blocked all Internet links to reports on the new technology. This led Chen to write an urgent "night note" to US Government officials. The note said, "The intranasal nano-vaccine can target broad-spectrum flu viruses and induces robust immune responses."

The documents also include a picture of the Wuhan facility building taken by Dr. Chen.

The documents were obtained through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) [lawsuit](#) for records of communications, contracts and agreements with the Wuhan Institute of Virology in China (*Judicial Watch, Inc. v. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services* (No. 1:21-cv-00696)). The lawsuit specifically sought records about NIH grants that benefitted the Wuhan Institute of Virology. The agency is only processing 300 pages records per month, which means it will take until the end of November for the records to be fully reviewed and released under FOIA.

The nine grants to EcoHealth Alliance include the following:

- One **grant awarded each year** between 2010-2012 to EcoHealth Alliance, working with Chinese collaborator Jinping Chen of Guangdong Entomological Institute, to study in China “Risk of Viral Emergence from Bats.”
- One **grant awarded each year** from 2014-2017 to EcoHealth Alliance, working with Chinese collaborator Changwen Ke of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of Guangdong, in a project titled “Understanding the Risk of Bat Coronavirus Emergence.”
- A **grant was issued** in 2012 to EcoHealth Alliance, working with Xiangming Xiao of the East China Normal University, in a project titled “Comparative Spillover Dynamics of Avian Influenza in Endemic Countries.”
- A **grant was issued** in 2018 to EcoHealth Alliance, again working with Ke in the project called “Understanding the Risk of Bat Coronavirus Emergence.”

The new records **include an email** on March 20, 2020, that is labeled, “navigating politics,” NIH virologist **Jens Kuhn** forwards to NIH colleagues **Cliff Lane** (NIAID Deputy Director) and **Connie Schmaljohn** (senior NIAID official), a 2016 email of “high importance” that Kuhn received from Wuhan Institute of Virology Vice Director **Yuan Zhiming**, with the subject line “asking for help.”

In his 2016 email, Zhiming told Kuhn:

I am writing to you to ask your help. Our laboratory is under operation without pathogens, and we are now looking for the disinfectants for decontamination of airtight suits and surface decontamination indoor decontamination. We have tried several ones do [sic] determine their antiviral efficacy and corrosion to pipeline and wastewater treatment equipment. Unfortunately, we have found a good candidate. I hope you can give us some help, to give us some suggestion for the choice of disinfectants used in P4 laboratory.

What kind of disinfectants for decontamination of airtight protective clothes?

What kind of disinfectants for surface decontamination in door?

What kind of disinfectants for air decontamination in door?

What kind of disinfectants for infectious materials indoor?

What is the approval procedure for the choice of disinfectants in laboratory?

I am sorry to disturb you and I really hope you could give us some suggestion and comment

[sic].

Best regards and looking forward to seeing you in Wuhan.

Yuan Zhiming

After the new coronavirus emerged, on March 20, 2020, continuing on this [email chain](#), Zhiming writes Kuhn:

The 2019 novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) outbreak is a major challenge for global public health security. Infection with SARS-CoV-2 has been associated with serious acute respiratory distress syndrome with large number of patients' hospitalization and relatively high mortality. We had a very hard time in combating the infection in Wuhan, the epicenter of the COVID-19 in China, and now we can see the situation goes in good direction, with no reported confirmed case, no reported suspected case in last two days here. My colleagues and I, have been working on characterization of pathogens, antiviral screen, vaccine development, animal modeling since the early January this year, and some progresses have been made. I hope our understanding of the virus and the technology could be valuable in the global fighting to the virus. As I can see from the media, the virus is spreading in your country, and more people are infected during the last days, and the situation worries me a lot. I am confident that we could finally curb the spreading of the virus with our joint effort, and our life will return back to the normal soon. I do not know what I can do for you in the special moment and I hope you could protect you and your family.

Kuhn tells Lane and Schmaljohn, "I know Zhiming for quite some time and also met him personally in Wuhan twice ... He used to be responsible for the BSL-4 there."

Some of Kuhn, Lane and Schmaljohn's follow-on comments about Zhiming's emails are redacted under "deliberative process" exemption.

In an email exchange on August 11, 2014, between Chen and the head of the NIH-funded biosecurity lab at the University of Texas in Galveston, Dr. James Leduc, Leduc provides the initial contact between NIAID (via Chen) and officials at the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

Leduc **told Chen** that he had been working on an initiative to "form long-term scientific and technical collaborations with the new BSL4 laboratory" in Wuhan, under the direction of Dr. Yuan Zhiming, with whom Leduc had met "repeatedly." Leduc adds, "we are already attempting to build the kind of partnership [with the Wuhan Institute of Virology] that I think is envisioned under the GHSA [Global Health Security Agenda]."

A chart labeled "**NIH Extramural Projects with a Chinese Collaborator**, by IC, FY2010-2018," indicates NIH provided a total of 2,221 grants between 2010-2018 for projects involving a "Chinese Collaborator," with Anthony Fauci's NIAID providing the most grants among all NIH subagencies, furnishing 490 grants. The remaining 1,731 grants were from 19 different NIH subagencies.

An additional chart shows that the NIAID financial grants increased steadily over those eight years, with a particular spike in 2013; and the number of grants jumped from 34 in 2012 to 61 in 2013.

Another spreadsheet shows the 2,221 grants disbursed among 261 universities, laboratories, and private companies. The vast majority are in the US, but others are in China, the UK, Canada, Thailand, and Australia.

Additional spreadsheets detail the **2,221 grants**, including:

- A grant to Wayne State University, working with Chinese collaborator Xiaoyi Fang, to study in China "Venue-based HIV and alcohol use risk reduction among female sex workers in China."
- A grant to Purdue University, working with Chinese collaborator Yinlong Jin, to study in China "Selenium, other risk factors and cognitive decline in rural

elderly Chinese.”

- A grant to Peking University, working with Chinese collaborator Yaohui Zhao, in a project in China titled “China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study.”
- A grant to Boston College, working with Chinese collaborator Wei Sun of Renmin University of China, to study in China “The impact of Long-Term Care Insurance.”
- A grant to Florida International University, working with Chinese collaborator Sheng Li of Shanghai Institutes of Biological Sciences, to study in China “Regulation of juvenile hormone titers in mosquitoes.”
- A grant to the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, working with Chinese collaborator Yue Long Shu of the Chinese National Influenza Center, in a project titled “Southeast Regional Centers of Excellence for Biodefense & Emerging Infectious Di[seases].”
- A grant to Zhejiang University, working with Chinese collaborator Shulin Chen, to study in China “Collaborative Care for Depressed Elders in China.”

In [an email](#) on October 26, 2017, Chen sends a “trip report” to NIH colleagues advising them that she visited the Wuhan Institute of Virology. She includes [a photo](#) of the lab and states,

My contact who helped arrange the visit is Dr. Zhengli Shi, who is a Chinese collaborator on a NIAID grant to EcoHealth for SARS like corona virus project. The P4 lab is located in a new developing zone about one hour car ride from the current institute location in central Wuhan city. The location will be the new campus for the entire institute in the near future (a lot of construction is going on right now). Since we are not allowed to take photos so only the photo from the outside is attached.

In an email marked “[high importance](#)” on August 6, 2014, with the subject “Harbin Wuhan China Global Health Security,” Chen discussed collaborating more with Chinese health officials with her NIH colleagues. Chen states:

I had a meeting with [[HHS Health Attache to China](#)] Liz Yuan and Liz updated me with regarding the activities involving Global Health Security Agenda. China’s National Health and Family Planning Commission (Ministry of Health) and China CDC are supportive and should commit to be a part of the network.

We do want to expand the Chinese participation in the network to include other partners and sectors, including agriculture and veterinary.

We could not so far identify any direct NIAID collaboration with the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV). However, from a quick search we found Dr. James Leduc of University of Texas at Galveston and Dr. Jian Han of the Hudsonalpha Institute of Biotechnology at Birmingham recently visited WIV... James Leduc is the head of the national lab at Galveston and I believe NIAID funded the establishment of the lab (biosecurity lab) ... And please find if both James Leduc and Han Jian have any NIAID funded grants.

In [an email](#) on February 26, 2018, Chen messaged her NIH colleagues to report that she had learned of a, “type of new flu vaccine using nano-technology from China’s Wuhan Institute of Virology” and discovered that the Chinese had blocked all Internet links to reports on the new technology.

Working with the State Department’s Environment, Science, Technology, and Health (ESTH) officer Sarah Oh, Chen then wrote a “night note” about this development. In the note she cites Cui Zongqiang, head of the Wuhan research group stating, “The intranasal nano-vaccine can target broad-spectrum flu viruses and induces robust immune responses,”

Chen adds, “In our study, an intranasal nanovaccine worked well against infections of H1N1 and H9N2 virus in mice,’ Cui said.” NIH official Gray Handley responded to Chen, saying, “Thanks, Ping. All quite interesting developments.”

In a January 20, 2017 [report](#) to NIH colleagues, Chen describes the, “Global Virome Project,” which is sponsored by USAID and other organizations, and would be led by the US and China. Chen notes:

The purpose of the project is to identify viruses present in the wildlife with potential crossing over to humans, causing human infection and disease. Following the identification of the viruses is the development of vaccines to protect human population... One of the partners in this project is EcoHealth Alliance. Peter Daszak from EcoHealth Alliance is one of the leaders for the

GVP project and he has NIAID grant from RDB looking at the coronaviruses in Bat populations in China in collaboration with Wuhan Institute of Virology.

In an email exchange dated July 14, 2015, Chen, tells NIH colleagues that she has been coordinating projects and visits with the Wuhan Lab.

Chen states that she's "been working with Ken [presumably the US Health Attaché in Beijing Ken Earhart] on preparing for the pre advance team visit in preparation for the possible HHS Secretary visit to China in Sept. 9-11. The pre advance team will be in Beijing this Wednesday. I will meet them on Wednesday to brief on the NIAID activities in China."

Chen then **identifies** the individuals who she has been coordinating with in Wuhan:

I visited three Chinese PIs [presumably Principal Investigators] on NIAID funded projects in Wuhan (I contacted 5 PIs, one was not available and one never responded) last week. Briefly, one PI at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, Dr. Shi Zhengli, is known as the bat lady. She studies the viruses carried by the Chinese bats trying to identify the viral reservoirs, particularly focusing on coronaviruses such as SARS and MERS. She has identified bat viruses that are genetically very close to the SARS virus that caused the outbreak in China in 2003. Another PI I visited is Dr. Yang Dongliang ... Dr. Yang has one of the one-year programs where he collaborated with US PI on universal HIV vaccine research. His role in the collaboration was to collect HIV isolates from Chinese patients, sequencing the viruses, and close the envelope genes for the US collaborators to screen for conserved epitopes via a novel screening technology. The third PI I visited is Dr. Wu Jianguo, who is the head of the state key lab of virology in Wuhan University. [Redacted]. George Gao [likely **top Chinese CDC official** George Fu Gao] is a close collaborator with the lab. In addition to basic research on virology, the lab also does translational research in antivirals, vaccines and reagents with industry partners.

In a previous March 16, 2015, **email** update to NIH colleagues, Chen informed them that "First week of May, visit Wuhan Institute of Virology with Ken to see its BSL4 lab and talk about common interests. While in Wuhan, I will meet the Chinese PIs on NIAID grants."



In a **report** dated January 12, 2015, Chen advised her NIH colleagues on her attempts to get an invitation to the ceremony of the completion of the BSL4 lab:

I sent a request to the Wuhan Institute of Virology for invitation to attend the BSL4 laboratory completion ceremony. I got a message from the contact I have that limited number of international people outside France will be invited to the ceremony as it is the French who helped with the construction of BSL4 lab. I just received a reply that I won't be able to attend the ceremony but will have the opportunity to visit the institute at a later time.

I received a message from ESTH [the State Department's **Environment, Science, Technology and Health Office**] asking the representatives from US Fed agencies to provide information on China's biosecurity. The message says: State's office that deals with biosecurity has sent to Embassy Beijing the email below regarding China's policies, capabilities, and activities related to a range of biological threats and risks: including infectious diseases, biosecurity, biological weapons, and bio-terrorism."

In a **proposed program** that Chen provided to NIH colleagues for an upcoming virology conference which was to be held on March 9-10, 2015 in Beijing, titled "Advancement in Our Scientific Understanding of Avian Influenza and MERS as Emerging Respiratory Threat to Public Health in Asia and Beyond – From Viral Evolution to Animal and Human Hosts," one of the scheduled speakers was Matt Frieman of the University of Maryland School of Medicine, who was going to address the topic "Repurposing FDA Approved Drugs for Coronavirus Infection." Another speaker, Xinquan Wang, of Tsinghua University, was going to address the topic, "Potent Neutralization of MERS-Cov by Human mAbs to the Viral Spike Glycoprotein."

In a **redacted email** dated November 3, 2014, Chen notes to her NIH colleagues that the Chinese government had begun screening people who merely came from Ebola effected regions of Africa:

Chinese government has been screening people who come from the Ebola regions of Africa. Two US CDC people in Beijing were sent to Sierra Leone one month ago and were scheduled to return. Last Friday I was able to help Ken [presumably the US Health attaché in Beijing, Ken Earhart] to acquire the

information on the monitoring process and guarantee procedures that are implemented in three Beijing's infectious disease hospitals through my contacts. The concern is [redacted].

In an email on March 6, 2018, Chen informs NIH colleagues that the US Embassy in Beijing was "collecting US-China collaboration stories in preparation for the World Health Day on April 7." One of the US-China collaborations labeled "successful activities," was "Coronavirus: NIH-funded investigators are conducting detailed surveillance throughout China and in other countries on the emergence of coronaviruses (such as SARS and MERS-CoV) and studying the dynamics of viral transmission from animals to humans, which may identify potential outbreak threats to the U.S. and other parts of the world."

Another "**success story**" was titled, "Influenza: NIH receives influenza samples and information on circulating viruses from China and Hong Kong to assess risks associated with emerging variants for pandemic and zoonotic threat and to monitor the prevalence and evolution of the novel H7N9 and H10N8 viruses in China. These strains are otherwise unavailable and they are essential to the development of vaccines needed for a potential influenza pandemic."

"These documents are of world-wide interest, as they suggest that the Wuhan lab had major bio-safety issues and the American government was carefully monitoring its activities from a national security perspective even while funding it," said Judicial Watch President Tom Fitton. "Dr. Fauci and his colleagues have some more explaining to do."

Also from this lawsuit, in June 2021, Judicial Watch **revealed** that the NIAID under Fauci gave the Wuhan lab \$826,000 for bat coronavirus research from 2014 to 2019.

In March 2021, Judicial Watch **uncovered** emails and other records of Fauci and Dr. H. Clifford Lane from HHS showing that NIH officials tailored confidentiality forms to China's terms and that the World Health Organization (WHO) conducted an unreleased, "strictly confidential" COVID-19 epidemiological analysis in January 2020. Additionally, the emails reveal an independent journalist in China pointing out the inconsistent COVID numbers in China to NIAID's Deputy Director for Clinical Research and Special Projects **Cliff Lane**.

In a related lawsuit, in October 2020, Judicial Watch received from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services **300 pages** of emails of Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, including his approval of a press release supportive of China's response to the 2019 novel coronavirus.

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