



# THE NIH DIRECTOR

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- Photo Gallery
- Congressional Testimonies
- Advisory Groups
- Video & Sound Gallery
- Articles
- Statements

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# Statement on misinformation about NIH support of specific “gain-of-function” research

Based on outbreaks of coronaviruses caused by animal to human transmissions such as in Asia in 2003 that caused [Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome](#) (SARS), and in Saudi Arabia in 2012 that caused [Middle East Respiratory Syndrome](#) (MERS), NIH and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) have for many years supported grants to learn more about viruses lurking in bats and other mammals that have the potential to spill over to humans and cause widespread disease. However, neither NIH nor NIAID have ever approved any grant that would have supported “gain-of-function” research on coronaviruses that would have increased their transmissibility or lethality for humans. NIH strongly supports the need for further investigation by the World Health Organization (WHO) into the origins of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. Working with [a cross-regional coalition of 13 countries](#), we urge the WHO to begin the second phase of their study without delay.

**Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.**

## Related Links

- [NIH Gain-of-Function Research](#)
- [HHS P3CO](#)

**Director, National Institutes of Health**

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