

Chinese scientists discover EIGHT never-before-seen viruses... and now they plan to experiment with them

By [JOHN ELY SENIOR HEALTH REPORTER FOR MAILONLINE](#)

Chinese scientists have discovered never-before-seen viruses lurking on a tropical island — and warned they could infect humans.

Researchers tasked with preparing the world for future pandemic took almost 700 samples from rodents living in Hainan, just off [China's](#) southern coast. Eight novel viruses — including one belonging to the same family as Covid — were uncovered in the project, funded by the Chinese Government.

Experts said the discovered pathogens had a 'high probability' of infecting humans should they ever cross the species barrier.

As a result, they called for further experiments on the viruses to determine exactly what their effects on humans could be.



Researchers took almost 700 samples from rodents living in Hainan, just off China's southern coast

WHERE CHINESE SCIENTISTS HAVE FOUND SEVERAL NEW CONCERNING VIRUSES



They found eight novel viruses, including one belonging to the same family as Covid



Shi Zhengli - dubbed the 'Bat Lady' or 'Bat Woman' for her work on bat coronaviruses - investigated the possibility Covid could have emerged from her lab back in 2020 according to colleagues, she is also the editor *Virologica Sinica*

The findings were shared in the journal [Virologica Sinica](#), the publishing arm of the Chinese Society for Microbiology (CSM).

CSM is linked to the state-affiliated China Association of Science and Technology, which 'accepts administrative supervision' from the Chinese Government's 'Ministry of Civil Affairs'.

Virologica Sinica is also edited by Dr Shi Zhengli, an influential scientist described as China's 'bat woman' who works inside the [Wuhan](#) Institute of Virology – considered to be the source of the Covid pandemic in some corners.

The journal's editorial board also features over a dozen other academics linked to the WIV.

MailOnline reported earlier this year how the same journal controversially claimed that new virus samples from bats in Hainan proved Covid wasn't engineered in a lab.

The claim was, however, [dismissed by independent experts](#).

The new study analysed 682 anal and throat swabs collected from various rodents captured on Hainan between 2017 and 2021.

These samples, which were categorised by specific rodent species and location on the island, were then sent for labs to be examined.

Analysis revealed a host of new 'novel' viruses, including one new [coronavirus](#) that the experts dubbed CoV-HMU-1.

CoV-HMU-1 was found to be a betacoronavirus, a sub-genre of coronaviruses which includes Covid.

The scientists also found several new pathogens in other groups of viruses.

These included two new pestiviruses, which are related to yellow fever and dengue, a new astrovirus, a family of viruses that cause infections like stomach bugs, two new parvoviruses, which can cause flu-like symptoms, and two new papillomaviruses, a family of pathogens that can cause genital warts and [cancer](#) in people.

They highlighted the discovery of the new pestiviruses and parvoviruses as being particularly significant as they were found in the Edwards's long-tailed giant rat and the Sikkim rat species.

Neither were known to previously harbour such types of pathogens.

Hainan, home to about 9million people, is isolated from mainland China.

Other such unknown viruses likely exist in similar parts of the world, the scientists added.

'The results expand our knowledge of viral classification and host range and suggest there are highly diverse, undiscovered viruses that have evolved independently in their unique wildlife hosts in inaccessible areas,' they said.

'If these viruses cross the host barrier, they are highly possible to cause zoonosis.

'The pathogenicity and associated impact of these novel viruses on humans and animals should be evaluated in further studies.'

Rodents carrying potential pathogens pose a huge threat in terms of zoonosis, the researchers said.

This is because they are 'widely distributed', 'diverse in species', and 'have a strong reproductive ability'.

As well as that, they migrate in groups and are concentrated in densely populated, humid, and warm places such as central and southern China.



Some experts now say Covid may have emerged from within the Wuhan Institute of Virology. Here security personnel are pictured keeping watch during a visit by the WHO in 2021

This provides 'them with many opportunities to interact with humans', they wrote.

Scientists have repeatedly warned the next pandemic could spring from animals with [climate change](#), habitat destruction and selling of live wild animals in so-called 'wet-markets' all factors increasing the risk.

Covid is originally thought to have come from an animal, most likely a bat.

Although, an ever-growing number of experts suspect experiments conducted in Wuhan may have sparked its spread among people.

Dr Zhengli herself was once concerned Covid [may have leaked from inside her lab](#), according to colleagues.

The so-called 'lab leak theory' poses that scientists in Wuhan were experimenting with Covid samples collected from the wild when the virus accidentally leaked containment, infecting citizens of the city and then the world.

While the theory has gained traction in years since the initial wave of cases, many scientists maintain that Covid most likely emerged naturally, being transmitted from animals to humans.

Such theories have largely pointed to Wuhan's Huanan seafood wholesale market, where numerous species of live animals were kept and sold, as the potential site where such an infection could have taken place.

Regardless, some experts have warned experiments on high-risk pathogens, which are often conducted in labs located in high-population areas, could spark new pandemics.

No concrete proof to support either Covid origin argument has been found, leaving experts fearing the truth behind the viruses origins will never be uncovered.

Beyond just establishing a historical fact, experts also want to find how Covid emerged to help stop other similar pathogens becoming pandemics in the future.

Retrieved January 17, 2024, from [Chinese scientists discover EIGHT never-before-seen viruses... and now they plan to experiment with them | Daily Mail Online](#)