

Statement in support of the scientists, public health professionals, and medical professionals of China combatting COVID-19

We are public health scientists who have closely followed the emergence of 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and are deeply concerned about its impact on global health and wellbeing. We have watched as the scientists, public health professionals, and medical professionals of China, in particular, have worked diligently and effectively to rapidly identify the pathogen behind this outbreak, put in place significant measures to reduce its impact, and share their results transparently with the global health community. This effort has been remarkable.

We sign this statement in solidarity with all scientists and health professionals in China who continue to save lives and protect global health during the challenge of the COVID-19 outbreak. We are all in this together, with our Chinese counterparts in the forefront, against this new viral threat.

The rapid, open, and transparent sharing of data on this outbreak is now being threatened by rumours and misinformation around its origins. We stand together to strongly condemn conspiracy theories suggesting that COVID-19 does not have a natural origin. Scientists from multiple countries have published and analysed genomes of the causative agent, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2),¹ and they overwhelmingly conclude that this coronavirus originated in wildlife,²⁻¹⁰ as have so many other emerging pathogens.^{11,12} This is further supported by a letter from the presidents of the US National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine¹³ and by the scientific communities they represent. Conspiracy theories do

nothing but create fear, rumours, and prejudice that jeopardise our global collaboration in the fight against this virus. We support the call from the Director-General of WHO to promote scientific evidence and unity over misinformation and conjecture.¹⁴ We want you, the science and health professionals of China, to know that we stand with you in your fight against this virus.

We invite others to join us in supporting the scientists, public health professionals, and medical professionals of Wuhan and across China. Stand with our colleagues on the frontline!

We speak in one voice. To add your support for this statement, sign our letter online. LM is editor of ProMED-mail. We declare no competing interests.

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For the SARS-CoV-2 genome analysis see <https://www.gisaid.org/epiflu-applications/next-betacov-app/>

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- 14 WHO. Director-General's remarks at the media briefing on 2019 novel coronavirus on 8 February 2020. Feb 8, 2020. <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/director-general-s-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-2019-novel-coronavirus---8-february-2020> (accessed Feb 18, 2020).