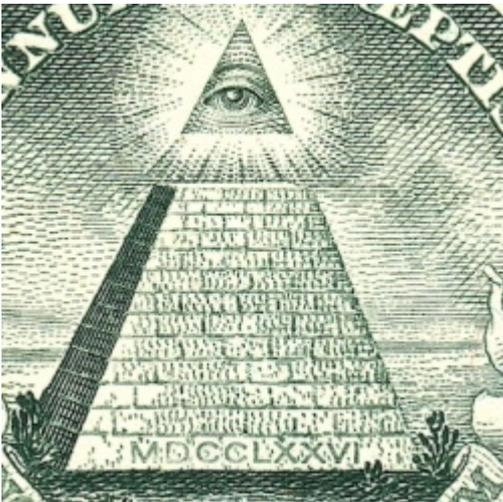


# COVID-19: The Best (Worst?) Coronavirus Conspiracy Theories



By Alex Berezow, PhD — March 26, 2020

*In the Digital Age, we have access to more information than at any time in human history. But that doesn't stop the spread of conspiracy theories. Here are the best (worst?) ones involving the new coronavirus and the disease COVID-19.*



Credit: Public Domain/Wikipedia [1]

There's something irresistible about conspiracy theories. For whatever reason, humans seem to have a psychological need to explain troubling phenomena as the end result of meddling by powerful, mysterious forces in the universe -- like the New World Order or Big Pharma.

Naturally, a scary new disease like COVID-19 that emerges several thousand miles away in a foreign country is just too good to pass up for most conspiracy theorists. Here are the best (worst?) ones we've come across:

**1) SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, is an escaped Chinese biological weapon.** This conspiracy theory has been repeated multiple times, even by high-profile individuals like Fox News's [Tucker Carlson](#) [2]. The biggest problem with this conspiracy theory is that genetically engineering a virus is a lot easier said than done. To make a virus more lethal or more contagious or both, scientists would need to know how to tweak pre-existing genes -- for instance, by making multiple point mutations at precisely the correct spots in the genome. That is far-fetched, to put it mildly. A genetic analysis in [Nature Medicine](#) [3] shows that the simplest

explanation is that the virus evolved and "jumped" into humans from an animal.

There is a caveat to this. Wuhan hosts a high-security biological lab, like the CDC, that studies dangerous microorganisms. Is it possible that Chinese scientists were studying a virus isolated from an animal and it accidentally leaked, for example by infecting a lab worker? That [can't be ruled out](#) [4]. After all, [U.S. labs have mishandled smallpox, anthrax, and influenza](#) [5].

**2) For their part, the Chinese are saying that the U.S. military introduced the virus into Wuhan** [6]. Americans aren't the only ones to come up with juicy conspiracy theories!

**3) 5G caused the coronavirus.** 5G, the latest version of telecommunications technology, has been [blamed for a lot of things](#) [7] -- cancer, asthma, memory deficits, autism, diabetes, obesity, impaired sperm function. We can now add coronavirus to the list, according to Dr. (???) Thomas Cowan. This takes a little bit of explaining.

[According to Dr. Cowan](#) [8], we do not get sick because of viruses. First, we get sick, and then our bodies produce viruses in response. How so? Our poisoned cells need to get rid of bad DNA, so they expel the bad DNA. That, in Dr. Cowan's universe, is the origin of the virus.

What causes our cells to become poisoned in the first place? [5G technology](#) [9], of course.

**4) People are dying from fear, not coronavirus.** That claim comes from Kelly Brogan, a "holistic psychiatrist" -- whatever that is -- who blogs for Gwyneth Paltrow's snake-oil website Goop. In a [video](#) [10], Brogan says that she does not believe in "germ-based contagion," which is sort of like saying, "I don't believe in the moon." She then says that it's silly to villainize any particular microbe (social justice for microbes?), and that "there is potentially no such thing" as the coronavirus. This cements Gwyneth Paltrow's place as America's #1 scourge on public health, surpassing even Dr. Oz.

**5) Vitamin C can cure or prevent the coronavirus.** No. The evidence that vitamin C prevents or reduces common colds is [scant to non-existent](#) [11]. Some coronaviruses cause the common cold, and because SARS-CoV-2 is a coronavirus, it can be thought of as a deadly version of the common cold. That means it almost certainly will not respond to vitamin C. However, there is evidence that [zinc lozenges reduce the duration of the common cold](#) [12], so perhaps they could do the same for COVID-19.

**6) Coronavirus was released (or is a hoax) to make big profits for Big Pharma.** There are several problems with that theory. First, Big Pharma is already wealthy. Second, just like those of nearly every other company, pharmaceutical company stocks took an [absolute beating](#) [13] during the recent market collapse. Tanking the economy is not a great way to rake in the riches. Third, pharmaceutical companies can lose a lot of money if they develop a drug or vaccine that ultimately fails in clinical trials. Fourth, if they make too much money, we all know that Big Pharma will get hammered by the public (and [certain populist politicians](#) [14]) who always look for new reasons to hate it.

**7) Coronavirus was released as a method of population control in China.** This one is particularly dumb. The Chinese government did a great job limiting population growth all by itself with its brutal One Child Policy. (Side note: Most of the aborted babies were girls.) Now, China is

facing a [demographic crisis](#) [15] because there won't be enough people to support the elderly and keep the economy going. Also, see #1.

**8) [Drinking cow urine](#) [16] and [shoving essential oil up your butt](#) [17] will prevent coronavirus.**

Our fact-checkers rated both as false.

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**Links**

[1] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conspiracy\\_theory#/media/File:Dollarnote\\_siegel\\_hq.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conspiracy_theory#/media/File:Dollarnote_siegel_hq.jpg)

[2] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2020/02/20/cell-phones-cancer-and-coronavirus-tucker-carlson-spreads-conspiracy-theories-14584>

[3] <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-020-0820-9>

[4] <https://thebulletin.org/2020/03/experts-know-the-new-coronavirus-is-not-a-bioweapon-they-disagree-on-whether-it-could-have-leaked-from-a-research-lab/>

[5] <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-anthrax-labs-analysis/how-to-fix-u-s-biosecurity-leaks-close-some-labs-idUSKBN0FJ0BC20140714>

[6] <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/13/world/asia/coronavirus-china-conspiracy-theory.html>

[7] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2019/06/27/no-5g-isnt-mutating-killing-or-cancering-you-14120>

[8] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyRP0iwaz9g>

[9] <https://www.newsweek.com/youtube-video-suggests-5g-internet-causes-coronavirus-people-are-falling-it-1493321>

[10] <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/goop-coronavirus-kelly-brogan-expert-contributor-md-deaths-covid-19-a9421476.html>

[11] <https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD000980.pub4/full>

[12] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2017/10/13/zinc-lozenges-may-triple-recovery-rate-colds-11959>

[13] <https://www.fool.com/investing/2020/03/26/3-big-pharma-stocks-plunging-the-most-during-the-c.aspx>

[14] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2019/07/31/bernie-sanders-dont-call-scientists-pharmaceutical-industry-crooks-14196>

[15] <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/01/17/world/asia/china-population-crisis.html>

[16] <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-india-cow-urine-pa/hindu-group-offers-cow-urine-in-a-bid-to-ward-off-coronavirus-idUSKBN2110D5>

[17] <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2020/2/25/applying-essential-oil-to-anus-cures-coronavirus-iranian-cleric>