

To: 'Chakravarti, Aravinda'[Aravinda.Chakravarti@nyulangone.org]; Kristian Andersen Baric, Ralph S[rbaric@email.unc.edu]; Trevor Bedford (trevor@bedford.io)[trevor@bedford.io]; Peter Daszak (daszak@ecohealthalliance.org)[daszak@ecohealthalliance.org]; Gigi Gronvall[ggronvall@jhu.edu]; Tom Inglesby (tinglesby@jhu.edu)[tinglesby@jhu.edu]; Stanley Perlman (stanley-perlman@uiowa.edu)[stanley-perlman@uiowa.edu]
Cc: Shore, Carolyn[CShore@nas.edu]; Chao, Samantha[SChao@nas.edu]
From: Pope, Andrew[APope@nas.edu]
Sent: Tue 2/4/2020 9:10:35 AM (UTC-05:00)
Subject: URGENT: Please review by NOON if at all possible...
[Response Letter DRAFT - Feb 4.docx](#)

Many thanks again for your thoughtful participation yesterday. The plans have changed in terms of our product. Instead of a "Based on Science" web posting, we are now developing a letter that will be signed by the 3 Presidents of our 3 Academies (NAS, Marcia McNutt; NAM, Victor Dzau; NAE, John Anderson), in response to a letter from OSTP. We think this will be more appropriate and expeditious.

Thus, given the urgency of the request from OSTP and HHS we ask that you please review the attached DRAFT CONFIDENTIAL letter, and let us know if you have any concerns or suggested edits. In particular, we would like to ask if there might be some additional detail added to the data needs that are identified. We think it would be helpful to be a bit more specific, but don't want to go into too much detail either. Your help there would be most helpful.

Many sincere thanks again for your continued engagement on this important activity!

Andy

Andrew M. Pope, Ph.D.

Director
Board on Health Sciences Policy
Health and Medicine Division
The National Academies of Sciences,
Engineering, and Medicine
apope@nas.edu

direct
office

Find us at nationalacademies.org/HMD

The National Academies of
SCIENCES • ENGINEERING • MEDICINE

CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT

February 4, 2020

[insert address]

Dear XXX:

Thank you for your letter regarding the current outbreak of a new respiratory virus, the 2019 Novel Coronavirus, or 2019-nCoV, which was first detected in Wuhan, China, and has now been reported in a growing number of locations worldwide, including the United States.¹ The request from OSTP is timely given the public health urgency of the outbreak and potential for misinformation.

In response to your request, we consulted leading experts² in the fields of virology, infectious disease genomics, genome sciences, epidemiology, microbiology, immunobiology, coronaviruses, emerging infections, biosecurity, and global health, to share their views of whether available genomic data on 2019-nCoV are consistent with natural evolution and the data that could help determine the origins of 2019-nCoV, specifically from an evolutionary and structural biology standpoint.

Many studies of the genome of 2019-nCoV to better understand its origin and how it relates to viruses found in bats and other species are already underway.³ The initial views of the experts⁴ is that the available genomic data are consistent with natural evolution⁵ and that there is currently no evidence that the virus was engineered to spread more quickly among humans. [ask experts to add specifics re binding sites?] They also told us that additional genomic sequence data from geographically and temporally diverse viral samples, including samples that have been collected prior to the outbreak in Wuhan, could be used to clarify the origins of the virus. Understanding the driving forces behind viral evolution may facilitate the development of more effective strategies for managing the 2019-nCoV outbreak. International collaboration is more important than ever to overcome these types of global challenges.

The National Academies stand ready to assemble a committee of experts to examine these issues in more detail and provide more complete evidence-based advice to you in an expedited manner if requested.

Thank you, again for your commitment to the National Academies and our efforts to provide independent, objective analysis; advise the nation; and inform public policy decisions.

Sincerely,

¹ “2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Situation Summary.” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, 3 Feb. 2020. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html#anchor_1580079137454. Accessed 3 Feb. 2020.

² [possible add list]

³ [insert references]

⁵ [possibly add brief explanation that this does not preclude an unintentional release from a laboratory studying the evolution of related coronaviruses]

cc: [insert names]