

MICHAEL FUMENTO

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The Press Is Already Trying Whip Up A New Pandemic Panic

July 08, 2020 · Michael Fumento · Issues & Insights · Coronavirus

China researchers discover new swine flu with 'pandemic potential'

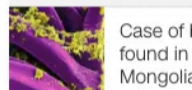


By Jessie Yeung, CNN

Updated 0223 GMT (1023 HKT) July 1, 2020



News & buzz



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Oh, no! With the planet still unlocking and some parts still tightly buttoned down, and with the world economy plummeting, “[China Researchers Discover New Swine Flu with ‘Pandemic Potential’](#),” blares CNN. “Scientists Say New Strain of Swine Flu Virus Is Spreading to Humans in China,” [shrieks the New York Times](#). Say it ain’t so!

Okay, it ain’t so. Not in any meaningful way. The media should go back to “murder hornets,” or find another asteroid with a chance in a zillion of hitting Earth.

The virus in question, G4 EA H1N1, is genetically descended from the [H1N1 swine flu](#) that caused what the World Health Organization [declared a pandemic in 2009](#). G4 shows “all the essential hallmarks of a candidate pandemic virus,” said a study in [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#) (PNAS).

But ... there are a few little caveats.

First, while [the Times says](#) the virus “is spreading silently in workers on pig farms in China,” that means pigs-to-humans and that’s been going on for so time. “This is not a ‘new’ new virus; it’s been very common in pigs since 2016,” [tweeted](#) Carl Bergstrom, a professor of biology at the University of Washington. “There’s no evidence that G4 is circulating in humans, despite five years of extensive exposure. That’s the key context to keep in mind.”

Okay, but it’s a *swine flu* !!! Um, yes, [pigs appear to play a role in most strains of flu](#), along with birds. Specifically, the massive swine farms of China are “mixing bowls” to produce new flu strains.

Also, the Times quoted a British scientist to tie it to *you-know-what*. “It may be that with further change in the virus it could become more aggressive in people much as SARS-CoV-2 has done,” he told them in an email. (They probably had to email 100 people to get that scary quote.) Except there’s no evidence of any such change in SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Early on [two strains were identified](#), one of which happens to be more aggressive in humans.

How about being related to the H1N1 flu that became pandemic? Pandemics are always bad, right?

That’s where this gets really interesting.

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You see it was that very flu that caused the WHO – always on the lookout for a new germ with which to terrify the world, expand its power, and fill its coffers – to redefine its definition of “flu pandemic.”

Heretofore it meant exactly what one would expect, a very severe flu that was killing or in any case had the serious potential of killing lots of people.

Problem is, [as I noted in a long series of articles at the time](#) (in other words, with foresight not hindsight), H1N1 wasn't playing along. Even though it was new, previous vaccinations and exposure to previous strains provided little protection, from the very beginning [indications were that it was vastly milder](#) than garden-variety seasonal flu.

Also, it appeared H1N1 was more contagious than seasonal flu. Normally, it's bad when a disease-causing bug is more contagious. But this proved to be the opposite. That's because different strains of flu compete with each other to see which can infect you first. That means H1N1 was essentially inoculating people against more serious strains and thereby saving lives. (In a historical context, [Edward Jenner observed](#) that cowpox infection prevented the far deadlier smallpox and used cowpox virus in the first vaccines.)

The final toll for that first H1N1 season, according to WHO's own figures, was a paltry [“over 18,449”](#) worldwide. By comparison, common seasonal flu normally kills 290,000 – 650,000 annually worldwide [says the WHO](#). The U.S. [had about 12,500 flu deaths](#), the CDC reported, whereas in 2017-18 [its estimate for seasonal flu was 61,000](#). In something of an understatement, the CDC said “the impact of the (H1N1) virus on the global population during the first year was less severe than that of previous pandemics.”

As it saw this unfolding, that its huge feral boar with tusks was proving to be a piglet, the WHO was in a nightmare position. In April 2009, [WHO flu czar Keiji Fukuda declared](#) that we could be facing a contagion on the order of the [Spanish flu](#) of 1918-19, and the United Nations [soon concurred](#). Spanish flu killed [about 50 million worldwide](#) (140 million adjusted for today's population) and 675,000 in the United States (2 million today). The two subsequent flu pandemics, the Asian Flu of 1957-58 and the Hong Kong Flu of 1968-69 also killed huge numbers of people.

This was all the more embarrassing considering WHO was still wiping egg off its face for [sounding the alarm for five years](#) about [H5N1 avian flu](#), described as a [“when, not if” pandemic that could kill “hundreds of millions.”](#) [Official WHO total: 440](#). Moreover, other public health organizations, the usual doomsaying “experts,” and mainstream media had all gone along. The President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology [forecast](#) that “as many as 90,000 people – mostly children and young adults – could die from the H1N1 flu virus.”

WHO hadn't yet learned how to pump up the numbers, as [it and the CDC would later learn to do with coronavirus](#), mostly by declaring a death *with* Covid-19 as a death *from* Covid-19, and also by saying no test is even necessary. But somehow it *had to* make H1N1 possibly qualify as a pandemic. There was only one way. Change the definition of “pandemic.” And so it did.

The original definition of [influenza pandemic](#) required “several, simultaneous epidemics worldwide with enormous numbers of deaths and illness.” [The rewrite](#) said pandemics “can be either mild or severe.” That renders the term meaningless, because seasonal flu always causes “simultaneous epidemics worldwide.” Now it just needs to be a sufficiently different strain. So theoretically G4 could start spreading from human-to-human, ultimately kill *nobody*, and still qualify as a pandemic.

Indeed, even the Times admits that humans infected with G4 are showing no illness. We know they have it only from blood tests. G4 could potentially *save* vast numbers of lives if it acts like H1N1 or Jenner's cowpox vaccination.

Then, with incredible chutzpah, the WHO even denied that it rewrote the definition of pandemic. “Having severe deaths has never been part of the WHO definition,” [Fukuda said](#). Never mind that it's still [right there on the WHO Website](#).

That means that if G4 followed in the footsteps of its “ancestor,” H1N1 (and the Times even admits that humans infected with G4 are showing no illness), and ended up actually saving a lot of lives, the WHO could (and of course *would*) declare it a pandemic. And given that the world seems to have decided that quarantining healthy people and destroying economies is a proper way of trying to reduce pandemic viral deaths, we could see a repeat of the horrors we’re still experiencing.

But that word “pandemic” will set off alarms everywhere, as indeed G4 is *already doing*. At a Tuesday Senate hearing the ever-reliable National Institutes of Allergies and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony Fauci said G4 was not an “immediate threat” but “something we need to keep our eye on just the way that we did in 2009 with the emergence of the swine flu.”

Inevitably some flu virus will be antigenically different enough and widespread enough to qualify as a “pandemic.” If we allow ourselves to forget how much damage we let the coronavirus cause, prepare for a sequel of what we’re going through now. And gosh, like “The Godfather II,” it may be even more powerful than the original.

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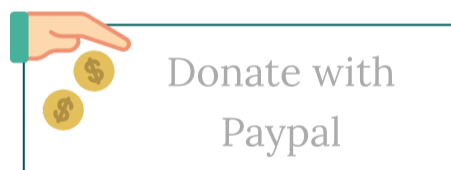
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