

**ACADEMIC MALPRACTICE:
EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS, THE GOVERNMENT
AND PEER REVIEW**

HEARING

BEFORE THE
SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CORONAVIRUS
PANDEMIC
OF THE

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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**ACADEMIC MALPRACTICE:
EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
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Tuesday, April 16, 2024
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY
SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC
Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:32 p.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Brad Wenstrup (chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Wenstrup, Miller-Meeks, McCormick, Ruiz, Dingell, Ross, Garcia, and Tokuda.

Also present: Representative Moskowitz.

Dr. WENSTRUP. The Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic will come to order. I want to welcome everyone.

And without objection, the Chair may declare a recess at any time.

I now recognize myself for the purpose of making an opening statement.

I ask for unanimous consent for Mr. Moskowitz from Florida and a member of the full committee to participate in today's hearing.

Today, the Select Subcommittee is holding a hearing to examine the relationship between scientific journals and the government. This is not a hearing to see how the government can be more involved in the journal editorial process but to make sure that the government does not involve itself or influence this process.

Academic, scientific, and medical journals are an incredibly important tool to spread research to the masses. There is no denying the awesome power of these periodicals, as well as their editors, that they hold over the medical and scientific communities. After the COVID-19 pandemic, we see that, and it affects the world for that matter. I utilize journals in my practice on almost a daily basis. They are an important component to the practice of science and medicine, and because of that, there can be no place for politics or inappropriate government influence.

Journals and, subsequently, their editors are telling the world about research that has been conducted, yet it is important to note they are not necessarily always the arbiters of truth. They provide a forum where scientific claims are made, defended, and debated by peer review, as it should be. However, we saw a breakdown of

that during the pandemic. Rather than journals being a wealth of information and opinions about this novel virus, of which we knew so little, they helped establish a party line that literally put a chilling effect on scientific research regarding the origins of COVID-19 and scientific communications.

As I have stated time and time again, this Subcommittee was established so we can collectively take a look back on the pandemic and see what we can do better for the next time. We invited the editors-in-chief of the Lancet, Nature, and Science. Only the editor of Science has had the courage to come and help us be better, and we are very thankful to Dr. Thorp for being here today, and I appreciate the frank and professional conversation we had before today.

The purpose of this hearing is to demystify the publication process. Editors hold an extraordinary amount of power within the journals in publication process, a process that is a black box to most of the public. They act as an umpire to judge the scientific research that is being published. Like an umpire, it is vital that they know about the sport and rules of play, but they themselves should never be in the competition. That is what appeared to have happened during COVID-19, and it is important to separate opinion versus scientifically proven fact and to highlight the varying hypotheses that may exist.

The publications of papers like, "Proximal Origin," which this Subcommittee has exposed as lacking in scientific integrity as well as being prompted by Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins, and the Lancet letter, where the Lancet did not even bother to check for conflicts of interest, it set a precedent from two of the most prestigious journals in the world that the natural origin of COVID-19 was the only theory plausible, period, the end. That is not the case, and anyone else who had even the inkling of another plausible scientific thought was immediately labeled a conspiracy theorist. How is that acceptable in the scientific community when the entire crux of the field is open for debate?

There is value in giving science a fair hearing. It should be the most pure and honest form of debate. We are holding this hearing to help shed light on the journal process so everyone can have a greater understanding of how business is conducted or maybe should be conducted. And, again, I want to express my disappointment that Dr. Skipper from Nature and Dr. Horton from Lancet declined to participate today, but I, again want to reiterate our appreciation to Dr. Thorp, standing up, showing integrity to testify before this Select Subcommittee today, and I look forward to a strong on-topic discussion.

I would now like to recognize Ranking Member Ruiz for the purpose of making an opening statement.

Dr. RUIZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses for your participation today in our hearing. There are things I agree with the Chairman and there are things that I disagree with, but we are still friends.

Scientific journals play an important role in informing the public about the world around us, critical issues facing our Nation, and advances in science and medicine. In fact, I have been published a couple of times myself in these peer-reviewed journals in medi-

cine. Since their inception, these journals have placed objectivity at the forefront of their efforts to study, review, and publish articles that advance our research enterprise, and when a once-in-a-generation pandemic struck our Nation in 2020, this was no different. But despite the Majority's claims in the press release announcing this hearing, the Select Subcommittee has not uncovered any evidence that directly implicates Drs. Fauci and Collins in a cover-up of the pandemic's origin or collusion with scientific journals to suppress the lab leak hypothesis.

Under the guise of investigating COVID-19's origins, the Majority has continuously advanced a conspiratorial narrative against our Nation's public health officials, relying purely on speculation. Their probe into federally funded research has spanned more than a half a million pages of documents, more than a dozen transcribed interviews, and multiple hearings, and yet it has failed to substantiate any of their claims about Drs. Fauci and Collins or even bring us closer to understanding how COVID came to be. Instead, it has only further politicized an issue of great importance to our public health and national security, which is not without consequence.

In fact, we are already seeing growing divides when it comes to trust in our Nation's institutions and how that influences people's behavior when it comes to protecting their health. Rebuilding the American people's trust in public health is critical to our ability to prevent, prepare for, and respond to future pandemics. And the way we go about that is not by continuing to manufacture distrust in our Nation's institutions by amplifying harmful and often outright false information about public health, or by jumping to conclusions about how this virus emerged when its origins are still inconclusive. Instead, it is by having honest conversations that are rooted in fact about what we can do better in the future.

So, as we begin today's hearing, I want to take a moment to address some of the allegations that have been levied by the Majority over the course of this probe and what the facts of the case have actually told us.

First, my Republican colleagues have alleged that Drs. Fauci and Collins orchestrated the proximal origins paper to suppress the lab leak theory, despite all evidence to the contrary. Documents and testimony made available to this committee have repeatedly shown that British scientist, Dr. Jeremy Farrar, played the lead role in organizing and shepherding the paper through publication. And second, my Republican colleagues have alleged that Drs. Fauci and Collins orchestrated a "takedown of the Great Barrington Declaration." Dr. Collins testified before this committee that he had privately called for "a quick and devastating published takedown of its premises out of concern for the public's health." Documents and testimony provided to this committee have never shown that Dr. Collins pressured an NIH employee or a scientific journal to "take down the Great Barrington Declaration." This committee seems to be forgetting that there is a difference between government speech, which the Supreme Court has previously ruled government entities have a right to do, and government coercion, which my Republican colleagues are accusing public health officials of without a shred of evidence.

That aside, I have to say I am worried that today's hearing is setting a dangerous precedent that if Congress doesn't like what you publish, you will be hauled in before a congressional committee to answer for it, until they prove their conspiratorial narrative. The fact is Congress should not be meddling in the peer review process, and it should not be holding hearings to throw around baseless accusations, especially when there is so much work we can and should be doing to prevent and prepare for future pandemics. Every minute wasted on spurious conjecture, every sentence spoken amplifying false information, and every hearing spent on unsubstantiated allegations comes at a cost, and at the end of the day, it will be the American people who will pay the biggest price. I yield back.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you. Today's witness is Dr. Holden Thorp. Dr. Thorp is the editor-in-chief of the Science Family of Journals of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He became the editor in October 2019. He currently holds faculty appointments in chemistry and medicine at George Washington University.

Pursuant to the Committee on Oversight and Accountability Rule 9(g), the witness will please stand and raise his right hand.

Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Dr. THORP. I do.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you. Let the record show that the witness answered in the affirmative.

The Select Subcommittee certainly appreciates you for being here today, and we look forward to your testimony. Let me remind the witness we have read your written statement, and it will appear in full in the hearing record, and thank you for that. Please limit your oral statement to 5 minutes.

As a reminder, please press the button on the microphone in front of you so that it is on, and the members can hear you. When you begin to speak, the light in front of you will turn green. After 4 minutes, the light will turn yellow. When the red light comes on, your 5 minutes has expired, and we would ask that you please wrap up.

Now I will recognize Dr. Thorp to give an opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF HOLDEN THORP, PH.D.
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, SCIENCE JOURNALS
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF
SCIENCE**

Dr. THORP. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chairman Wenstrup, Ranking Member Ruiz, and members of the Select Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Holden Thorp, editor-in-chief of Science and the Science Family of Journals. The Science Family of Journals is published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, one of the largest multidisciplinary nonprofit scientific societies in the world whose mission, in short, is to advance science and serve society.

Let me begin by saying how extraordinarily proud I am of the Science Journal's work, including in the first year of the pandemic

where we worked around the clock. Further, I am proud of the role that the scientific enterprise plays in society.

The journal, *Science*, is unlike most other scientific publications in that it has three components, each of which operates independently. Each issue of *Science* covers scientific news, offers commentary about science, and publishes peer-reviewed research in many disciplines. As editor-in-chief, my role is different for each section. For the research journal, I oversee a staff of expert editors in different specialties. For news, I oversee award-winning coverage that is led by an editor and journalists who enjoy the same freedoms as any other media outlet in our country. And as part of our commentary section called *Insights*, I am an opinion writer who appears on the magazine's editorial page roughly every other week.

The peer review process is central to the scientific enterprise. For each paper we handle at the journal, we abide by a rigorous, multi-step peer review process that begins with staff editors who assess papers. These staff editors consult with expert colleagues and a board of external scientists. If a paper is determined to be potentially suitable for the journal, it is further evaluated by multiple reviewers who are researchers in related fields. This ensures that all aspects of a given study receive appropriate scrutiny. We also have a careful process to ensure that the reviewers do not have a conflict of interest. Most studies that make it beyond these evaluations are revised and re-reviewed to ensure that all reviewer concerns have been adequately addressed. Then a paper is reviewed again by our staff editors who clarify language and images to make sure they are consistent with the evidence that has been presented.

If a paper makes it all the way through all of this, then it is summarized, shared with more than 8,000 reporters under embargo, and posted on our website. And then, upon publication, it is maintained by us in perpetuity for any corrections and adjustments that happen after publication, according to our well-established process. This process was applied consistently to the nearly 9,000 research papers submitted to the *Science* Family of Journals related to SARS-CoV-2. It is applied to every research paper on every topic.

Regarding the paper at the center of this discussion, "The Proximal Origin of SARS-CoV-2," it was never submitted to *Science*. In fact, I had no knowledge of this piece published in *Nature Medicine*, nor the related letter in *The Lancet*, until they were published. However, I want to call attention to three publications in our journal, *Science*, that are relevant to today's discussion.

The first is a letter published in our commentary section in May 2021 from prominent researchers in the area of COVID-19 origins, led by virologist, Jesse Bloom. This letter called for a thorough investigation of a lab origin of COVID-19. When we published it, I wrote that, "Good science requires that the laboratory escape be rigorously investigated before being ruled out. China should allow for a dispassionate examination of the data and allow scientists to do what they are trained to do." The publication of this letter turned the tide in the discussion of COVID origins toward considering the possibility of a lab origin, and I stand firmly by this sentiment today.

I also want to highlight two papers from virologists Michael Worobey and Jonathan Pekar, published in our research section in 2022. These papers present geospatial and genetic information that support, but do not conclusively prove, the theory of natural origin. They were initially posted on the internet as pre-prints in a process many scientists use before submitting to a journal. They were widely read and reported prior to their submission to Science. Once they were submitted to Science, they were reviewed in accordance with the same process I just described. At the end of that process, they were edited under my supervision to ensure that their language was consistent with the extent to which the evidence supported their conclusion of natural origin. To be clear, and to state up front, no government officials from the White House or the NIH prompted or participated in the review or editing of the Worobey papers by us.

In closing, I want to recognize the scientific community and my colleagues at the Science Family of Journals for their roles during the COVID-19 pandemic. We did not get everything right during COVID—no one did—but in 18 months, the scientific community identified the virus, determined how it spread, developed therapies that have had major life-saving impacts. Scientists, the scientific method, and peer review are national treasures, and I am thankful every day for all three, and, of course, scientists are not and never will be perfect. We are human. But the scientific method enables us to reach beyond our individual limitations by requiring evidence and constant self-correction. It helped us end the pandemic, and it contributes to a strong and prosperous America.

Thank you for having me today, and I look forward to taking your questions.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you, Dr. Thorp. I now recognize myself for questions, and I want to start with the empty chairs in the room. We also invited Dr. Skipper from Nature and Dr. Horton from Lancet, both of which publish a significant amount of federally funded research. Dr. Thorp, you are here. You showed up. Do you think your colleagues should have as well?

Dr. THORP. I do. I am disappointed that they are not here.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you. Before we get into some more substance questions regarding some of the public statements, and, again, we are trying to look at process here and how we can do things better in the future. But the first is, after our first hearing on the origins back in March 2023, you tweeted, “One side has scientific evidence. The other has a mediocre episode of ‘Homeland.’” We have heard from scientists, foreign affairs experts, intelligence experts, that a lab leak is possible. Even recently with Dr. Fauci, he said it is not a conspiracy theory. The tweet appears to contradict your testimony today. Would you still put the same thing out today or have you learned something or why was that put out at the time?

Dr. THORP. No. As I said in my written testimony, I was not as careful expressing my personal opinions on my personal Twitter page as I should have. That does happen on social media from time to time. I have gotten off Twitter, and I highly recommend that because in addition to making my life better, I don’t have to take my blood pressure medicine anymore, so my doctor is very happy I got

off of Twitter also. I apologize for that. That was flippant, and I shouldn't have done that.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Well, I appreciate that. So let me ask another question. In an editorial published November 12, 2021, you were discussing the recently revealed DEFUSE proposal, the one where EcoHealth, UNC, and the WIV proposed inserting furin cleavage sites into novel coronaviruses. You wrote, unequivocally, these experiments were not conducted. How did you know that they weren't?

Dr. THORP. Yes. Well, opinions that I express on the opinion page are very clearly marked as opinion, as you alluded to in your opening statement. We publish opinions in Science because we like to provoke discussion about them, and every 2 weeks I have to come up with 720 words of my opinions to put on there, and that was a topic that people were certainly interested in. I was not aware, especially, of the information that your committee has since obtained about that grant, and I understand why you would be so interested in all of that. At that time, I was going from what was reported in news stories that were around. That is what opinion journalists do. We read news stories, and we write commentary based on those opinions.

So, at that time, I concluded that it was a proposal that wasn't funded and there are many proposals that are not funded in Science. And so, something that was not funded, I didn't see as significant as some people did. I understand how you could see it was circumstantial evidence to support some of the things that you are looking for, and I was critical of both the way that Dr. Collins and Dr. Daszak handled the revealing of that proposal. And I certainly wasn't aware or something that I agree with you, it is very important that you have only recently uncovered, and that is that Dr. Daszak may have had other plans other than what was in the proposal.

Now, I think it is also true that the viruses that they were talking about were not close enough to COVID that those experiments themselves could have led to the pandemic, but it is certainly true that they were discussing all of those things in that proposal. And no one that I mentioned in that editorial was happy with me after I wrote that because I criticized both parties.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Yes. I mean, when you say one thing in your proposal, but in your private comments, you are talking about doing something different, it raises an eyebrow.

Dr. THORP. Yes. I was not aware of that at that time.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Neither were we.

Dr. THORP. Yes.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you. Dr. Thorp, in your opening statement, you walked through the editorial process, and I greatly appreciate that. I thought it was a great statement you put forward, and I appreciate your candor. You mentioned two COVID origins papers that were pre-printed and eventually peer reviewed and published in Science. What is the standard practice for pre-prints? Are they submitted to Science and then published online or vice versa? Take me through that.

Dr. THORP. Yes. This is very important for your committee, and it is a very important part of my life, so I appreciate you giving

me the opportunity to walk through it. We used to live in a simpler world where pre-prints didn't exist, but they have made all of this in some ways better and in some ways much more difficult. So, it is common for scientists now to take the version of the paper that they are likely to submit to a journal and put it on what we call a pre-print server, and on that pre-print server, anybody who wants to can look at it.

The primary purpose of it is to get the information in the paper out to the scientific community so that other scientists can benefit from what they have discovered. And that part of it, you know, I really like because our process can take a long time sometimes, and it is a reasonable criticism of scientific publishing that we tie things up too long while we are doing all of those procedures that I described to you. So, the pre-print is a mechanism for solving that problem. However, it creates a lot of complications because the media can cover those pre-prints. The pre-prints can get into the public discourse very easily. And this was certainly true with Worobey and Pekar, as those papers are improved during the scientific process and even afterwards because sometimes we have to adjust papers after the fact. None of that is in the record that is on the pre-print.

And this is one of the main reasons why journals are important because not only do we evaluate and improve the version itself, but then afterwards, we are responsible for any comments and criticisms and adjustments in the paper that have to be made after the fact. So, the benefits of the pre-print are that the journals aren't holding up the world from getting scientific information. The drawback is it makes the whole thing noisier. And so, there are a lot of people in my line of work who long for the day when we didn't have pre-prints because it made our jobs easier in that respect.

Dr. WENSTRUP. I appreciate that. Before I go to the Ranking Member, I just want to point, these two papers were the subject of a front-page spread in The New York Times. And one author quoted saying, "When you look at all of the evidence together, it is an extraordinarily clear picture that the pandemic started at the Huanan market." But that is not what the paper ended up showing, and you pointed that out in your opening statement. I appreciate that, and it seems that these studies, much like "Proximal Origin" and Lancet letter, were used to stifle debate.

I now recognize the Ranking Member for 5 minutes of questions.

Dr. RUIZ. For 14 months, under the guise of investigating the origins of the novel coronavirus, the Select Subcommittee has relentlessly probed our Nation's scientific community and researchers. Last year, we spent hundreds of hours scrutinizing the drafting and publications of the "Proximal Origin" paper, demanding thousands of pages of internal documents from researchers involved in the paper, conducting transcribed interviews with these researchers, subpoenaing their private communications, and calling two of them to testify at a public hearing. And through the fall and winter, the Select Subcommittee conducted a dozen transcribed interviews of current and former NIH and NIAID scientists.

We have undertaken all of this work, but to what end? Has targeting these researchers and probing the publications of the proximal origin paper meaningfully advanced our efforts to prevent and

prepare for future pandemics, or has it been about fishing for evidence with the goal of advancing a predetermined partisan narrative targeting Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins and our Nation's scientists and public health officials?

Dr. Thorp, what work is the scientific community associated with your journals doing to better understand the origins?

Dr. THORP. Yes. So, I think there are still people out there doing research on trying to understand the origin of COVID. But I think one thing that I would love to explain to folks is that during this phase of the pandemic, at the beginning, most of us were focused on, or I was much more focused on things that could get us out of the pandemic than understanding where it came from.

Now, that doesn't mean I don't agree that it is important to know where COVID came from. But a lot of this that was going on was going on at a time when scientists were working around the clock, rearranging their lives, dealing with the disruptions that they had from COVID, and our journal, we were all at home on our computers going through thousands and thousands of COVID papers, looking for papers that would help us get the vaccine or new drugs.

Dr. RUIZ. I agree. I understand that. But now looking in hindsight, would you agree with the statement that both the scientific and the intelligence communities, maybe you might not know about the intelligence communities as much, but there have been some published reports from different agencies, that the thing we can say with certain is that there is no certainty.

Dr. THORP. Yes. I agree with that.

Dr. RUIZ. You agree with that. So, there is no certainty without thinking whether this is a lab leak, and there is no certainty if this is a zoonotic transmission.

Dr. THORP. That is correct.

Dr. RUIZ. That both are still plausible, and we need to research to determine which one it is. But given the barriers of China non-compliance with our investigations, shouldn't we be preparing on both fronts to determine how can we prevent a zoonotic or how can we prevent a lab leak?

Dr. THORP. Yes.

Dr. RUIZ. Thank you. Thank you. I just needed a yes. So, when I joined the Select Subcommittee as Ranking Member, you know, I hoped that we could work on the challenging, but critically important mission of identifying forward-looking solutions to prevent and prepare for future pandemics. This included taking a serious look at whether SARS-CoV-2 emerged from a natural zoonotic transfer or from a research-related incident so that we could propose substantive policies to prevent the emergence of the next deadly novel airborne virus.

But instead of examining this question seriously and consistently and objectively, this Select Subcommittee has so far only leveraged it to target our Nation's scientists, Dr. Fauci, Dr. Collins, and to vilify our Nation's public health officials. And in order to prove their theory that Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins suppressed the truth, which is dependent on the lab leak theory, they must push and prove that, in fact, it was leaked from a lab, and there is no alternative, or else the entire narrative is false. And in doing so, you

know, the Select Subcommittee has undermined the critical mission of preventing and preparing for future pandemics.

Dr. Thorp, what actions should Congress be taking to close off both natural-and research-related incident pathways for novel viruses to emerge?

Dr. THORP. Yes. Well, I think that laboratory safety is incredibly important. In fact, I co-chaired and wrote the last National Academies of Sciences' study on chemical laboratory safety, which has many principles in it that would also apply to biological laboratory safety. And it is a riveting reading, and I would be delighted to send it to you if you want to read it. So that is half of it. And on the other half, if it is true that it came from the wildlife trade, we have published many papers talking about how understanding the extent and regulation of the wildlife trade in China is very, very important, and I could refer you to a number of papers about that.

Dr. RUIZ. So, you know, what is more, as a result of unproven conspiratorial accusations, like those suggesting Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins covered up the origins of COVID-19 pandemic, trust in science and our Nation's public health institutions have suffered. The Pew Research Center found that fewer than 3 in 10 Americans have a great deal of confidence in scientists to act in the public's interest. So, while manufacturing of distrust is largely happening along party lines, it will hurt us all and our public health in the long run, whether you are Republican, Democrat, or Independent. And we are already seeing the consequences. For example, threats against scientists and public health officials have surged in the wake of these accusations, which could have long-term impacts on our ability to cultivate a strong and growing work force to protect our public health.

Dr. Thorp, have you observed an increase in threats against scientists and researchers since the COVID-19 pandemic, and does this trend undermine our efforts to prevent and prepare for future pandemics?

Dr. THORP. I have only heard about it secondhand, but I have many people that I work with in the scientific community that I know who have endured that, and I find it very unfortunate.

Dr. RUIZ. It is very unfortunate. And as a physician and public health expert, I am deeply troubled that the Subcommittee has prioritized its time and resources on advancing this extreme partisan narrative over fulfilling our obligations to the American people to mitigate future public health threats. So, I once again urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to stop the conspiratorial accusation. There has been no evidence directly linking Dr. Fauci or Dr. Collins. Instead, let's work on forward-looking solutions that can prevent and prepare for the next pandemic. Thank you.

Dr. WENSTRUP. I now recognize Mrs. Miller-Meeks from Iowa for 5 minutes of questions.

Dr. MILLER-MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Dr. Thorp, for testifying before this Select Subcommittee today.

This hearing could not come at a better time, especially with the coronavirus pandemic in the rearview mirror. And during the pandemic, we saw clear collusion, non-conspiratorial, between certain stakeholders and government entities, such as, one example, how

the American Federation of Teachers and Randi Weingarten were heavily involved in the drafting of the CDC school closure guidance with how we discussed and talked about infection-acquired immunity, which is a real thing, but even public health people were denying that it existed. We have evidence of that from this Select Subcommittee.

Collaboration and collusion between non-medical entities like the AFT and the government have real-world consequences. It is no secret that keeping children out of the classroom had devastating impacts on their mental health and education markers, including reading and math scores. It has also forced parents to stay home with their children to participate in remote learning, rather than being able to go to work and support their families. In this scenario, there was no peer-reviewed or medical backing, but rather, sheer political interest that occurred at the expense of children, parents, teachers, and the country writ large.

Part of doing medical research and going through the peer review process means changing, correcting, or eliminating portions of your work. It is also important to recognize the reality that authors and those in the medical community should be comfortable defending their work and be able to explain rationale behind those findings. And Dr. Thorp, I think you may have already explained this, but can you please detail the review process for publications?

Dr. THORP. Yes. If a paper is submitted to a peer-reviewed journal, first we decide if we are going to have it reviewed, and we do that in collaboration with some advisors that we have, and then we send it out and it goes through successive rounds of review and revision by experts. And only after it survives all of that do we then prepare it for publication where we check over it, and then if there are concerns raised about the paper after that, we mediate the discussions about those and decide if there are other things that need to be done.

Dr. MILLER-MEEKS. Having gone through that process for publication, I can—

Dr. THORP. Congratulations.

Dr. MILLER-MEEKS [continuing]. echo that it is arduous. Have you ever notified the government of certain articles or topics that your journal was reviewing, and have you ever felt pressured by a government to publish or any government to publish or not publish certain articles?

Dr. THORP. I have never done that for a research article, but my opinion pieces go to 8,000 reporters 4 days before they are published. And a lot of times, if we think that somebody might get a question about something that is in one of my opinion pieces, we let them know ahead of time so that they will have a complete answer if they get asked. And since I wrote about a lot of government officials during this period, and I still do in all administrations and in all countries around the world, I do from time to time let them know ahead of time that there is an opinion piece coming that they might get asked about.

Dr. MILLER-MEEKS. Well, thank you. And since you mentioned opinion pieces, I think that there was research that was suppressed due to groupthink, and how does your journal combat groupthink as it is currently magnified by peer review?

Dr. THORP. Well, thankfully, we rely on a peer-review process that awaits evidence, and scientists are opinionated people, just like everybody else, but we also know, and we could have done a lot better job at explaining this, that science is a work in progress. And so, when we see new data, we change the way we are thinking. And I obviously did that many times during the pandemic and so did everybody else, and in the future, we need to do a much better job telling people that. And I think it is something that we take for granted because that is what makes science fun. That is why we do it because it changes, and we need to do a much better job of helping the public understand that. And I have written many opinion pieces for the scientific community on that topic.

Dr. MILLER-MEEKS. Yes. As you correctly pointed out, science is not consensus of opinion. And I just want to say, since the time I came into Congress in 2021, I have talked about why the origins of COVID-19 were important, not partisan, not conspiratorial, but one, laboratory safety. The world has a right to know that the correct type of research is being done in the correct lab safety environment; No. 2, immediate disclosure of viruses or bacteria that may lead to a pandemic; and No. 4, the ethics of the type of research that is being done in those laboratories. To say that there was no certainty and no outcome from these hearings, I am proud of the work this Select Subcommittee has done. We are talking about this topic today because people dared to question the narrative that was being proposed, and trust suffers because of censorship, because of a lack of debate within the scientific community. And so due to the work of this Select Subcommittee, I think that we have advanced people that have disparate voices, people that dare to challenge the current narrative, which we have seen in science time and time again.

And I will bring up peptic ulcer disease is not caused by type A personality, but a bacteria, and thank goodness people were willing to challenge the medical narrative. But if disparate voices know that they will be heard, they will not be censored, and that absolutely, 100 percent will lead to better preparation for the next pandemic. With that, I yield back.

Dr. WENSTRUP. I now recognize Mrs. Dingell in Michigan for 5 minutes of questions.

Mrs. DINGELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Over the course of this hearing, we have had several baseless claims about wrongdoing by Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins. Of course, these claims are nothing new. They were predetermined since the outset of this Congress and debunked through Republicans' own probe, but that doesn't stop people from recycling them, even in the absence of evidence. To date, nearly half a million pages of documents and more than a dozen transcribed interviews of current and former Federal officials and researchers, all at taxpayers' expense, have failed to reveal a cover-up of COVID-19's origin or any other wrongdoing by Dr. Fauci or Dr. Collins.

As Select Subcommittee Democrats have repeatedly said, and as the paper's authors, Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins, all testified, neither Dr. Fauci nor Dr. Collins suppressed the lab leak theory or orchestrated the Proximal Origin paper, nor did they organize the February 1, 2020 conference call. Rather, Dr. Jeremy Farrar organized

that call and played a leading role in shepherding “Proximal Origin” through publication. Those are crystal clear facts acknowledged in Republicans’ own materials. In fact, Republican questioning during Dr. Fauci’s transcribed interview explicitly recognized that they were nitpicking words and believed that Dr. Fauci was testifying truthfully when he said he made no edits to revisions to Proximal Origin. And for the record, the Select Subcommittee Democrats would appreciate it if the Republicans would release that transcript.

As for the Great Barrington Declaration, we know how disastrous immediately lifting community mitigation measures would have been at a time when the COVID-19 death toll had just surpassed more than 1 million nationwide. That is what Dr. Collins recognized when he privately called for a takedown of the declaration’s premises. Dr. Collins never pressured an NIH employee, or a scientific journal for that matter, to censor the declaration, and Republican claims to the contrary are just not true. For the record, we would also appreciate the release of Dr. Collins’ interview transcript. And as for the Republicans claims about Dr. Fauci’s and Dr. Collins’ censorship of views suggesting COVID-19 does not have a natural origin, let’s critically examine Republicans’ star document.

Dr. Thorp, on May 12, 2021, you emailed Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins, and informed them that the Science would be publishing a letter calling for an investigation of COVID-19 origins that is “transparent, objective, data driven, inclusive a broad expertise, subject to independent oversight, and responsibly managed to minimize the impact of conflicts of interest.” In response, Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins thanked you for your email, reiterated their complete support for a thorough investigation into COVID-19’s origins, and acknowledged that it was unfortunate that legitimate scientific questions were being politicized against NIH. First question. Dr. Thorp, is it an accurate summary of your email exchange with Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins?

Dr. THORP. It is.

Mrs. DINGELL. Two, did Dr. Fauci or Dr. Collins tell Science not to publish that letter, even when understanding that it might be twisted against them by proponents of misinformation?

Dr. THORP. No, they told me the opposite of that.

Mrs. DINGELL. Was it your understanding that Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins both supported an independent and thorough investigation into COVID-19 source?

Dr. THORP. They both said that in those emails.

Mrs. DINGELL. Thank you, Dr. Thorp, and I do agree this committee should be doing very good work. I don’t take any doctor at his word, unfortunately. Some doctors here probably would like to give me lectures sometimes, but we got to tell the truth and get to the bottom of it, and we got to protect the public. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

Dr. WENSTRUP. I now recognize Ms. Ross of North Carolina for 5 minutes of question.

Ms. ROSS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and it is a delight to see you, Dr. Thorp, and thank you so much for your service to the state of North Carolina. And then, of course, through your current work,

you and your family have done so many wonderful things for our state, so I am thrilled to see you today.

Dr. THORP. It was an honor to do it all. Thank you very much. Good to see you again.

Ms. ROSS. Good to see you. So, I am going to take a little different tack. I want to note that the approach that my Republican colleagues have taken today is a little bit surprising. The Select Subcommittee heard transcribed interview testimony from both Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins nearly 4 months ago. And I want to remind everybody here and then just inform you because you may not know this, that none of their takeaways for the press at that time point to specific testimony that demonstrated academic malpractice by either Dr. Fauci or Dr. Collins.

The Chairman sent invitations to the witnesses noting a plain fact. Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins communicated with scientific journals during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is to be expected. It is completely unsurprising. And after all, Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins were scientists before, during, and after the pandemic, and it would be unreasonable to suggest that they should have paused their scholarly inquiries during a time of great scientific uncertainty. Government actors querying academia on issues that are academic in nature isn't malpractice or unlawful. It is just doing their jobs. In fact, government speech is a feature of our constitutional democracy, even in this context. As the Supreme Court has explained, "A government entity has the right to speak for itself. Indeed, it is not easy to imagine how the government could function if it lacked this freedom."

The question we really need to be asking ourselves today is simple. The evidence available to the Select Subcommittee provides a straightforward answer. Did Dr. Fauci or Dr. Collins coerce scientific journals to censor or suppress certain views on questions related to COVID-19? Now, the question of coercion was one recently heard by the Supreme Court in *Murthy v. Biden*, and a clear majority of the Court was skeptical of the claims in that case. In fact, Justice Kavanaugh agreed that if the government were to "regularly call up the media, that alone is not dispositive of government coercion."

Even then, Republicans present today have only demonstrated a handful of communication by the government to scientific journals. Dr. Thorp, are you aware of any threats made by Dr. Fauci or Dr. Collins to compel your journal or any other journal to publish or to withhold publication of a particular work related to COVID-19?

Dr. THORP. No, I am not.

Ms. ROSS. Well, here is the thing. Nothing, none of this really matters unless journals dispute what has been said today and say that there was censorship. Dr. Thorp, I would like to give you a moment to respond to allegations of censorship. Why is it important that journals publish competing views on scientific questions that remain reasonably open to debate?

Dr. THORP. Yes. Well, as I said and what I posted when I posted the letter from Jesse Bloom calling for the investigation of the lab origin in Science, there are compelling national interest reasons. But it is also true that what makes science great is when scientists argue passionately with each other, go to conferences and lab meet-

ings and argue about things and debate things, and then rely on the peer review process and the process of exposing the information to wide groups of people, who, in today's world, can comment on social media and on websites and all over the place to eventually lead to this conclusion. And we get there in this messy, human, glorious process. That is what makes my job so interesting.

Ms. ROSS. And can you just tell us how your journal's editorial process safeguards against undue influence?

Dr. THORP. Well, our editors make their own decisions based on their expertise as to what papers they are going to publish only after consulting widely with people who have no conflicts of interest in evaluating the paper, and only after they are revised extensively to make sure that a group relies on them. And then when they are published, we take responsibility for mediating any discussions after the fact that may require us to adjust the paper.

Ms. ROSS. Well, thank you so much for your time, and I yield back.

Dr. THORP. Good to see you.

Ms. ROSS. Good to see you.

Dr. WENSTRUP. I now recognize, Mr. McCormick of Georgia for 5 minutes of questions.

Dr. MCCORMICK. Thank you, Dr. Chair. Appreciate you and appreciate you for showing up today, Mr. Thorp. I think it takes a lot of guts and balance. I have watched what you have written. And you and I don't always agree on everything, but one thing I really agree on is the fact that we give fair, qualitative analysis of something. This is science to some degree, and sometimes scientists have disagreements, but it is OK to debate that publicly without squashing one side or the other. Thank you for being here when others declined.

Dr. THORP. Well, it was not that hard to get here on the Orange Line.

Dr. MCCORMICK. I appreciate that. For people who don't know who are watching, that means he is a local. With that said, it is interesting to me when we watch the debate over different things, some people have discredited things like Cochrane Review, which, when I was going through medical school, we are having actually journal studies, in journal club, and talking about what studies meant the most. Cochrane Review was the gold standard. Would you agree that that is one of the more important reviews that we have in scientific research and analysis of medical studies?

Dr. THORP. I am not a physician, so I am not sure I know exactly what you are referring to.

Dr. MCCORMICK. OK. I will kind of go through the Cochrane Review because Cochrane Review is something we use when you have a whole bunch of experts go over meta analysis of all kinds of studies and come up with the most scientifically proven theories, whether it be on vaccinations, whether it be on medical treatments. It could be on mask wearing. It could be on any myriad of different scientific studies based on what works best in medicine. It can be with specialties like cancer or with virology or epidemiology, all the different things that you have written on. Cochrane Reviews is comprehensive. It is not focused on one direction or another. It is

to gather all the different studies and see which ones were done scientifically versus which ones were just done with a bias.

Dr. THORP. While you are explaining that, I remembered what you are talking about, so thank you for that.

Dr. MCCORMICK. Absolutely. And in my opinion, it is very much the gold standard. It was always held as the golden standard. It wasn't political. As a matter of fact, when I was going through medical school and residency, I don't remember politics ever once being measured inside of a scientific discussion until now. This unfortunate evolution of COVID became politicized, and, of course, now we can't even have a good scientific discussion because everything is based on what politics you fall. And if the President, whether it be Democrat or Republican, chooses one side, of course, you have to choose the other side, and that is the unfortunate downstream evolution of this debate.

There was one time, as a matter of fact, we had a President, I believe, it was Garfield, who was treated by several physicians who didn't wash their hands because at the time, that wasn't science. And yet a guy named Lister said you should wash your hands, but nobody paid attention, and we contaminated the President and he died. That is the evolution of science.

When it comes to this meta analysis, one of the things that we would have had was a study on mask wearing for example. And during the middle of this, I am an ER physician, treating thousands of patients for COVID. I said, you know, if you look at this scientifically, if you look at this even from a commonsense standpoint, if you are wearing a mask at school but you are constantly taking it off, putting it on, putting it on desks, and all the things that kids do, you are probably not helping things. And of course, we did meta analysis, we did a Cochrane Review, and it was shown scientifically not to help at all. Matter of fact, it was a dead even wash, and yet it has been politicized, and people say, well, that is not real science. And ironically, the same thing goes for the way that we looked at treatments for this COVID disease and the way we talk about medications and isolation and everything else has been politicized.

Could you comment on how the politicization of this disease has actually inhibited a good scientific solution for future debate on medical procedures?

Dr. THORP. Yes. Well, first of all, I just want to say we published a huge study in Bangladesh on mask wearing that is not completely in agreement with that Cochrane Review, but it also has plenty in there for people who don't want to force people to wear masks because they are only partially effective, and everybody could read that if they wanted to. But I think the politicization of COVID, you know, if we look back on it, is something that we all probably wish we hadn't experienced and hadn't contributed to the extent that we did. And I think the scientific community contributed to that sometimes, and I think politicians contributed to it as well, and it would have been nice to have a calmer path through the whole thing. But thankfully, science works in a way that got us to a lot of things that did work.

Dr. MCCORMICK. Let me ask you one final question. I am running out of questions. I spent way too much time lecturing instead

of asking the question. Do you think that politicians are better suited to make policy on healthcare than doctors and healthcare professionals?

Dr. THORP. I think that politicians should make policy based on anything with the best information that they can get.

Dr. MCCORMICK. I would make the counter argument that maybe politicians stay out of the way of physicians making decisions so we can actually get the best results and not have one-size-fits-all. Thank you. With that I yield.

Dr. THORP. Yes.

Dr. WENSTRUP. I now recognize Mr. Mfume of Maryland for 5 minutes of questions.

Mr. MFUME. Mr. Chairman, thank you, and I thank the Ranking Member. One of the things that this hearing clearly proves is that we are sometimes all over the place more than we need to be. And to the extent that we can do Monday morning quarterbacking, we all have perfect records, but that is just not the way life goes. And it did not go that way for COVID, so here we are, once again, both sides of the aisle trying to figure out an approach that creates a template and the proper history for anybody that comes behind us should we ever be faced with something like this again.

Dr. Thorp, I want to thank you for being here. I, believe it or not, I have followed you from way back at GW through the days at UNC, and I have had a chance to note some of your writings and I have agreed with you in most instances. I think the right word that I continue to get for you as I talk to people, “a straight shooter.” And I spent some time as the executive director of the National Medical Association, and then after that over at the National Institute on Health Minority Disparities at NIH. And then just before I returned to Congress, spent 9 years at Research America, where, you know, being the largest research organization in the Nation, we get a chance to hear all the views that are academic and otherwise.

But through all of that, that straight shooter tag has stayed the same about you. There are people who believe strongly in the fact that you bring a sense of balance, even though they don’t always agree. Dr. Shirley Malcom comes to mind as one of the persons that continues to exalt you to talk about she believes how fair you are, if I can use that term, and I think I am hearing some of that from some of the members of the committee today.

I just want to do a couple of quick things. In July 2021—make that May 2021—Science published a letter from a group of scientists calling for a full investigation of both theories for the origin of COVID-19. Could you take a second to describe how the letter was considered, No. 1, by the team at Science and what effect it had, if any, on your approach to those questions?

Dr. THORP. Yes. So, we had not gotten papers like the two that your committee is very interested in that my colleagues are not here to talk about that were in their journals. So, as I said, we were much more focused on the facts that would help us get out of the pandemic, and we respected our colleagues at the other journals who published those two papers and really didn’t think that much of it. So, we were all of the view that, or most of us, that

it was a natural origin, and there was an opportunity for us to focus on other things.

And then 1 day, we get this letter from a lot of people that we respect, including people who are on both sides of this debate, saying that there should be a further investigation. We were pretty surprised. I mean, I was thinking about the vaccine and the drugs, to be honest with you. And so, we got that letter, and it was from serious people, and we debated it. And we thought, wow, this is a big change, but if these folks are all on board with this, this is really, really important, and we debated it. Not everybody who works for me agreed that we should publish it, and so in the end, and this doesn't happen that often because most of the time, my folks make their decisions on their own, but it went all the way up to me, and I made the final decision to publish that letter.

And I got a lot of grief from people who said I was promoting conspiracy theories and all of this stuff, and you can find all of that on social media and elsewhere. But in the end, we decided to publish that paper, that letter. We promoted it to the 8,000 reporters. It was widely covered, and it was a big event in turning the tide toward the consideration of a lab origin.

Mr. MFUME. And then about 13 months later, in July or June 2022, the Science Family of Journals published a research article supporting the zoonotic spillover theory, and it appears that article went through several revisions before and since the publication. Could you take another moment then to share with the Subcommittee what unfolded at Science across the timeline and how it illustrates the role of scientific publishing and that process?

Dr. THORP. Yes. That story is a long story, and it is not over. So those papers were pre-prints. As has already been discussed today, they were widely covered in the media, so we knew a lot about them. And one other advantage of pre-prints is that we get to see all the discussion that happens when the pre-prints are out there before they are submitted to us, and that is, in a sense, an additional layer of review.

So, when they came to us, and they were roughly in the same form that they had been in, when they were pre-prints, they were revised, and there were significant concerns raised, which happens with every paper. The authors had the opportunity to address those concerns. We thought their concerns were that they were doing a sincere job of addressing them, so the paper was sent back to the reviewers. More concerns were addressed.

And one of the things that happens that is also really important when we are doing this, is we are not just deciding what is in the paper that you see when you go on the website, but we are also deciding what is in this enormous PDF file called supporting information. And then data, many, many more terabytes of data or megabytes or gigabytes of data that are posted and the amount of data that were supporting the paper, the number of references in the paper, many rewrites happened all of that time. And we knew that those papers were going to continue to be controversial because the people who believed in the lab origin were going to try to criticize it. And we have gone through many rounds of people writing to us and us getting more advice about things that we are going to post on the paper. And, you know, you might say, why did

you do that, you signed up for so much work, but we just felt like that was a really important service for us to provide to the world to maintain that.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you. My time has expired, but let me just say it has really troubled me to watch the vilification of Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins over the last couple of years. And I think we have been on the record at least many times on this side of the aisle about how that sort of stuff does not help us at all. I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Dr. WENSTRUP. I now recognize Ms. Tokuda from Hawaii for 5 minutes of questions.

Ms. TOKUDA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, unfortunately, today's hearing does nothing to better prepare our Nation for future public health threats, protect the American people's health, or enhance our understanding of COVID-19's origins. Instead, it is simply a continuation of this majority's unsubstantiated attempts to villainize, as has just been mentioned, our Nation's public health officials by advancing an extreme narrative against them that hinges solely on speculation. While the Majority has attempted to score political points with these probes, they have not only wasted critical time that could have been spent preventing and preparing for future pandemics, but they have also further politicized the question of COVID-19's origins and the COVID-19 response more broadly.

Unfortunately, since the start, as we know of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a concerning rise in distrust of public health officials amongst Americans. A recent survey from the CDC found that about a quarter of Americans say they trust the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's health recommendations not very much or not at all. The public's trust in our Nation's public health institutions is critical if we are to handle future pandemics and be prepared for them, and our ability to work together in times of emergencies to quickly save lives and reduce harm.

As vaccination rates of childhood and routine immunizations decline across the country, I have serious concerns as a mother that we are heading down a very dark path. Over the last year, my Republican colleagues have wielded the power of the majority of this committee to amplify extreme views on vaccines. They have invited experts who have pushed questionable advice, and they have continued on their crusade against our Nation's public health officials. These efforts to foster and capitalize on distrust and public health for partisan gain will only further harm our ability to keep current threats at bay and prevent future crises.

Dr. Thorp, I would like to ask you a few questions about this, if you will. From your perspective as the editor-in-chief of a leading scientific journal, how does growing distrust in our Nation's public health institutions hamper our ability to protect ourselves from current and future public health threats and pandemics?

Dr. THORP. Yes. Well, it is unfortunate, and I think that the danger of it is that, as has been said in this room, we are spending time having those debates instead of working out what is going on, and I think if we could all get to a place where there was more trust, that would be a good thing. And I think my take on that, which I write about a lot in my column, is that, as I have said, sci-

entists need to do a better job of explaining how science works, that it is not just facts that fall out of the sky and don't change. Science is a work in progress. We have well-defined processes for coming to conclusions. And we are not perfect, and sometimes we have to change the way we are thinking about things. And, again, those are the things that make my job enjoyable and interesting and compelling, and the science needs to do a much better job of helping people understand that. Science is what we know now, and it always has been.

Ms. TOKUDA. Right, and we need to make good decisions on policies based on real and accurate science. And if I may followup on that, and we are talking about trust here, would you say that the proliferation of health misinformation, whether circulated online, as we have seen, or amplified here in Congress itself, plays a role in exacerbating this distrust in our public health institutions?

Dr. THORP. I do, yes.

Ms. TOKUDA. Thank you. So clearly, we need to make sure that we are not doing harm. We need to take a Hippocratic Oath ourselves to make sure that when it comes to future pandemics, we are ready and prepared to make good decisions. And hopefully, that will be the continued work of this Subcommittee. Thank you. I appreciate your perspective on these matters, and, Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you. I now recognize the Ranking Member for the purpose of a closing statement, if you would like to make one.

Dr. RUIZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Dr. Thorp, for being here. Again, I truly appreciate your time and your frankness in your answers, and in your ability to communicate and help understand not just the process, but the importance of ensuring that politics does not get infused into the scientific peer-reviewed articles that should be based on science and methodology, and so that we can better elucidate the accurateness of the information. And the more research we do, the better. The more we are able to have debates based on scientific evidence, the better. The more that we challenge current opinions, or current data, the better because if the data stands for itself, then it will stand for itself for a very long time until more data shows that there is another opportunity to do that.

And so I encourage the scientific community to continue to do the research on both, you know, whether this was a lab leak or a zoonotic transmission, and move toward also policy recommendations to help bolster our surveillance systems around high-risk geographic zones for potential zoonotic transmission, as well as developing international bodies that can promote lab safety and have more transparency in a multilateral aspect and then build a system where we can move forward in rapid response where we contain a novel virus at the host country before it is transmitted throughout the world and becomes a pandemic.

You know, we want to work on that. We are ready to go. We want to focus on that. Those are things that will work to help prevent or mitigate the future pandemic. Those are things that will help save lives. And 10, 20 years from now, when that next potential pandemic happens, people are going to remember that we did

that. And we will talk about the policies that we recommended, that we passed, that we can quantify potentially and research the lives saved due to that, but I will tell you what. They won't be thinking about 20 years from now when people are dying, 1,000 to 3,000 a day, they are not going to be thinking about Dr. Fauci or Dr. Collins and whether or not they colluded or they suppressed the truth, which by the way, there is significant—significant—data already showing that they did not.

They are not going to give a damn, but we spent most of our origins investigation trying to prove that they did and there is collaboration and suppression because they knew it was a lab leak theory. And the caveat is that in order to prove that, you have to prove that there is lab leak theory. So, there is no open mind in this. There is no let's consider both aspects. It is focused on proving Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins suppressed the truth, undue influence, as the press release said. So, I really do, for the sake of our future, hope that we can have the prior scenario that I said, where 20 years from now, people will be thanking this Congress for the recommendations and the work that we do to help better prevent and mitigate the future pandemic through forward-looking solutions that will actually save lives. I yield back.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Thank you, and, again, Dr. Thorp, I am grateful for you being here today.

When I was asked to chair this Select Subcommittee, there were requirements and expectations of this committee. I am trying to fulfill those. As you read through what is in the official documents that it is hereby established for the 118th Congress, a select investigative subcommittee of the Committee on Oversight and Accountability called the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic. The Select Subcommittee is authorized and directed to conduct a full and complete investigation and study and, not later than January 2, 2025, issue a final report to the House of its findings, including the origins of the coronavirus pandemic, including, but not limited to, the Federal Government's funding of gain-of-function research and a government response. I said from the beginning, this is an after-action review, lessons learned. Dr. Thorp, we had that conversation: how can we do things better.

This virus was novel. We didn't know where it came from, and we started investigating and looking into science. That was our job. That is what we have been doing here. I don't think I have once mentioned political party since we have been here. It is about finding facts, et cetera. The purpose of today's hearing was to have a frank discussion to examine the relationship between scientific journals, the government, and peer review. And I want to thank you again, as editor-in-chief of Science, for being here today, as opposed to Nature and Lancet, refused to appear.

Again, you know, we know how important academic, scientific, and medical journals are to collect and disseminate information to the public. There is a difference between a hypothesis and a scientific fact. The definitions are different. Those are the things we have to make clear. Probably never before have either of these three journals been read by non-scientists as they have during COVID, so it is important that we get it right, that we are inform-

ing the public of what this is, what it stands for, a theory, a hypothesis, a scientific fact, an assumption versus a fact.

And so, we heard today transparency is essential in the process. And it is a rigorous debate and the testing of hypothesis, not just saying, forget it, let's just move on, what are we going to do in the future. That is part of it. Don't get me wrong. That is the main mission. One of my main missions with this is to get it right and to have suggestions or new laws, or whatever we need to do, to make sure that we have a system that people in America can trust.

And as I said from the beginning, I wish this thing came from nature because that is a heck of a lot less scary than making something like this in the lab and having it escape. But we have to look at all of it, and we have spent many hours looking at the nature theory as well as the lab leak theory. To suggest that we haven't is not true. So, we do these things, so we know that the conclusion is published and withstood testing, and yet still stand.

Doctors, professors, researchers, scientists utilize these important journals because of the extensive information they provide, and research conducted. And if they are in the arena, they may have something more to add to it and send you a letter on that or show you their science or what they are finding. That is how it is supposed to work, so it is essential the government doesn't put its thumb on the scale to sway any outcome. We are trying to make sure that wasn't the case, or was it? But research of all sides help guide government decisions as well. We shouldn't necessarily be the ones doing all the research, as Members of Congress, perhaps. Maybe we do, but you have to look at all sides. So, from our investigations here on the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic, we know what happened during COVID-19. Dr. Andersen, who was one of the authors of "Proximal Origins," said Dr. Fauci prompted this, for us to get together and write this. I didn't make that up. It is not a lie. Those were his words that we have gotten through our investigation.

I am going to tell you, I am going to submit for the record, this is the interim majority staff report on the "Proximal Origins of a Cover Up," it is entitled. The evidence that I refer to is in here, and I am going to submit it for the record in case not everyone on this committee has had the chance to read it.

Dr. WENSTRUP. So, a paper is published, and it appears there was sometimes a predetermined outcome from the beginning. You know, as doctors, we read all kinds of articles, and, you know, a lot of times I want to go to the conclusion first and then see if they already had the conclusion before they wrote their piece and look at things objectively. So, we have to do that sometimes, so it is hard to say that government officials didn't have any influence, especially on Proximal Origin when the record shows that those conversations took place, from government officials, saying I am putting you guys together, I want you to write this piece.

Now, just a few days ago, Dr. Daszak of EcoHealth Alliance released some emails that included one from an advisor to Dr. Fauci, Dr. Morens. The advisor wrote regarding the suspension of EcoHealth grant that, "Tony is now fully aware, and I think, and it is, I am told, involved in some sort of damage control." I didn't write that. I didn't make that up. That is in that email. This is

part of the things we are investigating as we have been tasked to do.

As the Ranking Member pointed out today, mistrust in our public health and public health officials is on the rise today, and it is unfortunate, and I want to do everything we can to change that. We need that. If the government wants to earn the trust of Americans back, it can only be done through transparency and reform, to acknowledge what we did wrong, innocently or not, so that we can figure out a solution to do better going forward. The government will never earn the trust back from the Americans by deeming all information that it doesn't like as misinformation, nor will it deserve that trust if that is what our government is doing.

Our hearing today was not designed to influence scientific journals. It is just the opposite, to better understand how articles and letters are published in these journals and what is the process so that the public can better understand the information before them, better understand what the editing process is and reviewed and later published so that they can trust it and take it for face value. You clearly pointed out today, there is a difference between an opinion and a scientific fact because you have to write one every week.?

Dr. THORP. Every 2 weeks.

Dr. WENSTRUP. Every 2 weeks.

Dr. THORP. You got any ideas for next week, let me know.

Dr. WENSTRUP. I will give you a call. Anyway, Americans deserve to see the work and the evidence that lead to the conclusion so they can decide for themselves if the information presented should be trusted or accurate, and with that, I yield back.

And with that, and without objection, all members will have 5 legislative days within which to submit materials and to submit additional written questions for the witnesses, which will be forwarded to the witnesses for their response.

Dr. WENSTRUP. If there is no further business, without objection, the Select Subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:48 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

