



Sainath Suryanarayanan &lt;sainath@usrtk.org&gt;

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## Questions regarding Xiao et al. (2020) in Nature journal

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Sainath Suryanarayanan &lt;sainath@usrtk.org&gt;

Wed, Oct 28, 2020 at 11:12 AM

To: guangzhouchenwu@sina.com, lxiao@scau.edu.cn, shenyy@scau.edu.cn

Bcc: Gary Ruskin &lt;gary@usrtk.org&gt;

Dear Drs. Wu, Lihua and Yongyi,

I am working with the public interest non-profit [U.S. Right to Know](#) to help increase public awareness about what is known and not known [about the origins of SARS-CoV-2](#). I am writing to seek your perspective about Xiao et al.'s (2020) *Nature* paper titled, "Isolation of SARS-CoV-2-related coronavirus from Malayan pangolins", on which you are listed as senior authors.

In raising questions about Xiao et al. (2020), it is not my intention to question your integrity. That said, I believe that [serious questions](#) concerning the accuracy and reliability of Xiao et al. (2020) need to be addressed in a transparent manner, especially because SARS-CoV-2 continues to cause staggering harm worldwide and efforts to understand and resolve the current pandemic and future such pandemics turn on sound scientific evidence. Xiao et al.'s finding has been crucial for substantiating claims that there are coronaviruses circulating in the wild that have very high similarity to SARS-CoV-2 and that therefore, SARS-CoV-2 is likely the result of animal-to-human spillover potentially involving multiple animal species as intermediaries.

You may know that [serious issues](#) have been raised by Alina Chan and Shing Hei Zhan about the veracity of Xiao et al.'s core data. Here are some of the key issues:

1. Xiao et al. "renamed pangolin samples first published by Liu et al. [2019] *Viruses* without citing their study as the original article that described these samples, and used the metagenomic data from these samples in their analysis" ([Chan and Zhan, biorXiv](#)). Do you agree that Xiao et al. renamed previously published samples and failed to attribute these to samples in Liu et al.'s 2019 *Viruses* paper? How quickly do you think this needs to be corrected in the public record?
2. Two days before your paper was received by *Nature*, *PLoS Pathogens* received a study by Liu et al. (2020) titled "Are pangolins the intermediate host of the 2019 novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2)?" Significantly, Liu et al. and Xiao et al. shared authors, and relied predominantly on the same dataset published by Liu et al. (2019) *Viruses*. Did you inform a *Nature* editor and reviewers about your close communications and data duplication with the authors of the *PLoS Pathogens* paper?
3. What do you think about extended figure 4 in Xiao et al, which you claim is a novel sample profile? [Chan and Zhan](#) show that this figure is clearly a composite of multiple samples (lung08, which is one of the previously published samples, and pangolin\_9/sample M1) being described as a novel sample profile in their paper. In your expert opinion, with the Chan and Zhan preprint in consideration, which single pangolin sample do you think was used to produce the read profile shown in extended figure 4? Could you comment on the accuracy of extended figure 4 and the way that it is described in the text?
4. Did Xiao et al. (2020) share their amplicon data with *Nature* reviewers? In the absence of such amplicon data, could you explain how the complete pangolin coronavirus genome sequence that you published was independently verified? On this point, what do you think about the finding that your full pangolin CoV genome is a 99.95% match to Liu et al. *PLoS Pathogen's* full pangolin CoV genome? Can you quickly clarify the reasons behind the high level of shared identity between these two separately published genomes?
5. On June 22, 2020, Xiao et al. added a new sample, pangolin\_10 to their *Nature* paper's bioproject (NCBI SRA BioProject PRJNA607174). This new sample was not described in the main text, figures, tables, or extended materials of the *Nature* paper that was published on May 7, 2020. Any comments on pangolin\_10 and whether it is acceptable for authors to deposit data, at a later date, that is completely absent from the text and figures of their publication? On this point, what do you make of the finding that pangolin 10 is likely a sample that is described in a separate preprint by Li et

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al. (sharing senior authors with Xiao et al.) that did not attribute the sample to the Xiao et al. *Nature* paper? Is this considered appropriate in the conduct of research and scientific publishing?

I hope you will fully address the above-named issues. I believe these issues are simply too important to be kept outside of public purview. Thanks so much for considering.

Sincerely,

Sainath

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沈永义 <shenyy@scau.edu.cn>  
To: Sainath Suryanarayanan <sainath@usrtk.org>

Thu, Oct 29, 2020 at 1:38 AM

Dear Suryanarayanan,

Thanks for your attention of our study. In fact, Nature had sent these issues to us. We will prepare a explanation.

Thanks a again for you mail.

Sincerely,

Yongyi Shen

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抄送:

主题: Questions regarding Xiao et al. (2020) in Nature journal

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