



## Editorial

### COVID-19 and the Conspiracy Theories

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The first known use of the term conspiracy theory dated back to the nineteenth century (1). It is defined as a theory that explains an event or set of circumstances as the result of a secret plot by usually powerful conspirators (2). It is commonly used, but by no means limited to, extreme political groups. Since the emergence of COVID-19 as a global pandemic in December 2019, the conspiracy theory was present at all stages of the pandemic. These theories involve mainly the disease itself and the main preventive measure, the vaccine. The sudden emergence and the rapid spread of the virus globally since its first appearance in Wuhan city as an outbreak of pneumonia, and the unsatisfactory hesitated performance of the world health organization at the beginning of the pandemic are among the inducing factors for these conspiracy theories.

The conspiracy theories regarding the origin of the virus include reasonable accidental leakage of the virus from the Wuhan laboratory, which appears as a slick hour-long documentary produced by an English - language news outlet in the United States, the Epoch Times. But interestingly, During the whole documentary, the Epoch time describes the virus as the Chinese Communist Party virus, giving the impression that the virus is targeting the USA and the western world (3). Another theory speculates the virus to be intentionally created in a Chinese lab as a part of a biowarfare weapon (4). This theory was especially popular among USA political people and according to Pew Research Center, it is accepted by nearly a quarter of adult Americans (5). China had developed a counter-conspiracy theory launched by the Chinese Foreign Minister Zhao Lijian who tweeted “it is possible that the US military brought the virus to Wuhan” (6). He refers to the participation of the US military personnel in the 2019 military world games in Wuhan month before the emergence of the pandemic. This counter-conspiracy theory is widely accepted internationally.

Other conspiracy theories spread among the public include COVID is a machination by big international pharmaceutical companies, the role of the American deep state and their secret member Dr. Anthony Fauci, the role of the Bill Gate, and his warning of a new pandemic during his participation in discussion about Ebola virus in 2015, the role of the 5 G network, the genetic pollution caused by genetically modified crops allows viruses to proliferate owing to environmental imbalance, and finally targeting the freedoms of the population by the globalist using the theory of COVID 19 which doesn't exist. These conspiracy theories, and probably many others, are believed by the general population in both developed and

underdeveloped countries all over the world.

Regarding vaccination, the conspiracy theories are more widely spread, especially through social media, and have more acceptance among the general population. The most important theories include; the vaccine has a tracking device and is used to injecting microchips at the vaccination site, using new technologies for making vaccines (mRNA) leading to alteration of human DNA, the vaccine causes infertility in women, the vaccine causes more severe symptoms and complications than the disease itself, and the producing of unsafe immunity (7). The rapid development of the vaccines and the contradicted information about its efficacy may be responsible for some of these conspiracy theories.

The circumstances accompanied the emergence of the COVID 19 epidemic and the development of the vaccines were fertile ground for the development of the conspiracy theories. These theories have a major negative impact on the general population, regarding their knowledge, attitude, and acceptance of vaccines. Researchers are invited to study these theories and put policies on how to deal with these conspiracy theories and their negative impacts.

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