

**Response from Chris Dore, Editor-in-Chief, The Australian:**

As you seem to be aware, Sharri has very recently given birth, and is in no position to answer your questions. Sharri is a journalist, why would she "respond to the findings"? If she were not on maternity leave, she might report on the latest research, as she has reported on all aspects of the story. Media Watch seems to think she is the story.

I would encourage you to read Sharri's book to understand her reporting on the topic, which has routinely been mischaracterised and hopelessly misrepresented by Media Watch and others who share your organisation's weirdly personal obsession with her.

It is not my place to give you any advice, but if you were interested I would also suggest you maybe even do some research into those you have quoted, by actually reading Sharri's book or by taking note of reporting from other serious international journalists over the past two years.

One, who has strong links to the Chinese virologists, declared in early 2020 the origin of the virus was the market, and has been making the case ever since, including expressing a belief that raccoon dogs could be to blame. I don't believe that claim has been peer reviewed, nor have the Science studies identified precisely what animal is responsible for Covid.

Your choice of selective quotes from your selected experts is hilarious. Good on you for doing whatever you can to undermine Sharri's reporting but plucking those lines out for her to comment on is curious and deceptive given what other options are available to you.

Let me be equally as selective. A single report in The Washington Post last week on the studies you cite features these compelling quotes:

– One of the authors, Kristian Andersen, an immunologist at Scripps Research: **“Have we disproven the lab leak theory? No, we have not.** Will we ever be able to? No. But there are ‘possible’ scenarios and there are ‘plausible’ scenarios. ... ‘Possible’ does not mean equally likely.”

The Washington Post:

– Jeffrey Sachs, a Columbia University economist, heads a commission sponsored by the Lancet journal expected to produce a report this fall on the pandemic, including the origin of the virus.

On Tuesday, after Science published the two papers, Sachs said in an email that he still favors the lab leak theory: **“The two competing hypotheses, natural spillover and laboratory creation, are both viable.** They should be compared directly against each other. In my view, the laboratory creation hypothesis is the more straightforward and more credible.”

Again, The Washington Post:

– The new papers do not declare “case closed” but are useful, noted David Relman, a professor of medicine and microbiology at Stanford University who was among the signers of the 2021 letter to Science calling for a probe of all possible pandemic origins. He said he would like to see a similarly thorough forensic study of the lab leak hypothesis. **“I don’t think we can say that we now know that it started here. I think we can say that something interesting happened in this part of the city,”** Relman said. **“We don’t have any [coronavirus] positive animals at the market.”** And from an article in The New York Times reporting on this research when it was first released in February this year:

– But others pointed to some gaps that still remained. The new papers did not, for example, identify an animal at the market that spread the virus to humans.

– “I think what they’re arguing could be true,” said Jesse Bloom, a virologist at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. **“But I don’t think the quality of the data is sufficient to say that any of these scenarios are true with confidence.”**

Again, The New York Times:

– David Relman, a microbiologist at Stanford University, raised the possibility that these patterns might be just evidence that the market boosted the epidemic after the virus started spreading in humans somewhere else.

– “The virus would have arrived in a person, who then infected other people,” he said. “And the neighborhood of the market, or the market itself, became a kind of a sustained superspreader event.”

Sharri's reporting has never professed to know the source of the virus, that's the point. Some other journalists and Media Watch seem to have all the answers. As the above extracts show, the latest "spatial" research, based on Chinese data, has created as much conjecture and sparked as much debate on the origins of the virus as every other scientific research and opinion published before it.

While I'm sure Media Watch, relying on your selective sources, will claim otherwise, clearly the question is not resolved and is still a matter of debate among the world's top scientists.

One question. Will you be examining the reporting of journalists from, for example, Vanity Fair, The Washington Post, The Sunday Times, MSNBC and The New York Times who, like Sharri, have employed serious journalistic rigour in an attempt to get to the bottom of one of the great mysteries of our time?

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Tim, all the best with your report.

I'm sure Media Watch will be as fair and balanced and open-minded as ever while unleashing yet another yawn-inducing, creepy personal attack on Sharri's professionalism and journalism.

What a bunch of weirdos you lot are.