

## MYTHS AND RUMOURS ABOUT NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

### 1. Donald Trump is responsible for the epidemic - **FALSE**

One of Russia's national TV networks, Channel One, has even launched a regular slot devoted to coronavirus conspiracy theories on its main evening news programme, Vremya ("Time"). One of the wilder ideas aired recently is that the presence of the word "corona", which means crown in both Latin and Russian, in the word coronavirus somehow implicates Donald Trump, because he used to preside over beauty pageants, handing out crowns to the winners. The segment then goes on to insinuate that the Chinese coronavirus strain has been artificially created, and that US intelligence agencies or American pharmaceutical companies are behind it.

There is no evidence to support these claims.

### 2. The novel Coronavirus affects only Asians and could be some kind of "ethnic bioweapon". - **FALSE**

This variant of the conspiracy theory also aired on Russian television and is, again, completely baseless. There is no evidence that Coronavirus affects only Asians and no evidence that it is a bioweapon. See below.

### 3. Coronavirus is a human-made virus developed in the laboratory, a result of bioterrorism research gone wrong or intentionally unleashed - **FALSE**

An article in the Washington Times suggests a government-run lab, the Wuhan Institute of Virology, could have been researching military applications for the coronavirus and may have been the source of the outbreak. The only basis for the claim is a quote from former Israeli intelligence officer Dany Shoham, who has expertise in biological warfare. He has promoted other conspiracy theories in the past. There is no evidence for his claim.

There is a similar story attributed to Francis Boyle, a professor International Law well known for conspiracy theories. He promoted a similar theory about Ebola Virus Disease.

### 4. Bill Gates caused the infection – **FALSE**

This conspiracy theory appears to have arisen from the claim that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation once gave a grant to a research institute that had done some research into coronaviruses. In fact, the institute in question was researching vaccines for coronaviruses that affect poultry and are important in agriculture. The research was not funded by the Gates Foundation in any case.

### 5. The Coronavirus outbreak was planned by vaccine companies hoping to make a profit. Or, similarly, that the US government had created and patented a vaccine for coronavirus years ago. **FALSE**

This is a hoax that was shared with nearly 5000 Facebook users. It is baseless. It is an old canard that seems to get raised every time there is a new infectious disease threat. There is no evidence for it.

6. Coronavirus is spreading from eating bat soup **FALSE**

There is a video circulating on line purporting to show a girl in Hong Kong or Wuhan eating a bat from a bowl of soup. It has since emerged that the video was filmed in Palau several years ago as part of a travel show.

This rumour may have originated from the theory that 2019-nCoV originated in bats and then jumped via another intermediate host to humans. However, the outbreak did not spread directly from bats. Bat coronaviruses lack the hardware to attach to human cells. Another intermediate host was involved, possibly Pangolins.

7. Chinese officials are seeking approval to start the mass killing of 20,000 people in order to stop the spread of new coronavirus. **FALSE**

This was published on a website AB-TC (aka City News) well known for posting junk news stories and hoaxes. It is pure fantasy.

8. You can get Coronavirus from receiving a letter or package from China **FALSE**

Coronaviruses do not survive long on objects such as letters or packages. It is safe to receive packages from China.

9. You can prevent Coronavirus infection by covering your body in sesame oil. **FALSE**

Seriously?

No, sesame oil does not kill Coronaviruses.

10. You can cure Coronavirus infection by drinking a mixture of vinegar water and the Chinese medicine Banlangen **FALSE**

Social media posts have touted natural treatments such as gargling salt water and eating garlic cloves as potential coronavirus remedies. There is no evidence for this, nor the rumour that drinking a mixture of smoked vinegar and the traditional Chinese medicine banlangen can cure Coronavirus infection. Banlangen can be used to treat the common cold (with unknown efficacy) but will not work for Coronavirus.

11. You can prevent 2019-nCoV by modifying your diet (for example, by avoiding cold drinks, milkshakes, or ice cream). **FALSE**

This is a video circulating online. It also demonstrates the removal of a parasitic worm from a person's lip, is many years old and has nothing to do with 2019-nCoV.



12. Pets are spreading the virus **FALSE**

There is no evidence that household pets, such as cats and dogs, can spread the virus. Contact with exotic animals should be avoided however and washing your hands after handling animals is a good idea.

13. Coronavirus can be prevented/cured by drinking MMS – Miracle Mineral Solution – which is essentially bleach **FALSE**

Yikes. This is actually dangerous. MMS is also meant to cure autism, cancer, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, and malaria and pretty much every other disease. Stay away from it. Drinking bleach, even diluted, is not a good idea.