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# Families of COVID Victims Sue EcoHealth Alliance Alleging Gain-of-Function Research Caused ‘Undue Risk’ and ‘Harm’

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By [Monica Dutcher](#)

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The families of four people who died from COVID-19 and one person injured by the virus are suing [EcoHealth Alliance](#) and the international nonprofit’s president, Peter Daszak, Ph.D., and a cohort of government and elected officials, hospitals, military personnel and others.

According to a [complaint](#) filed Aug. 2 in the Supreme Court of the State of New York, the defendants exposed the plaintiffs to “undue risk and actual harm” — “whether accidental or intentional” — by helping to fund and conduct [gain-of-function \(GOF\) research](#), create and release COVID-19, and conspire “to cover up” these actions.

Patricia Finn, the victims’ attorney, [told the New York Post](#):

“If we had known the source or origin of this virus and had not been misled that it was from a pangolin in a wet market, and rather we knew that it was a genetically manipulated virus, and that the scientists involved were concealing that from our clients, the outcome could have been very different.”

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The plaintiffs allege the defendants “knew that coronaviruses were dangerous and capable of causing a worldwide pandemic in the human population” and that severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) — SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) — was a readily transmissible disease, airborne, and could spread through small droplets of saliva in a similar way to cold and influenza.

Four of the plaintiffs, named below, claim wrongful death of a family member, each of whom “died as a direct and proximate result of medical complications” caused by a COVID-19 infection.

- Jenny Golden, daughter of Mary Conroy, died in August 2021.

- Monique Adams, daughter of Emma D. Holley, died in August 2021.
- Traci Osuna, wife of Raul Osuna, died in September 2021.
- Melissa Carr, wife of Larry W. Carr, died in August 2021.

Plaintiff Paul Rinker's claim is for personal injuries. Rinker was diagnosed with COVID-19 in 2021, hospitalized and placed in the intensive care unit.

According to the complaint, many of the defendants' failures are documented in U.S. Inspector Gen. [Christi Grimm's January report](#), "The National Institutes of Health and EcoHealth Alliance Did Not Effectively Monitor Awards and Subawards, Resulting In Missed Opportunities to Oversee Research and Other Deficiencies."

The U.S. Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found NIH and EcoHealth did not sufficiently comply with procedures, which limited their abilities to "effectively monitor federal grant awards and subawards to understand the nature of the research conducted, identify potential problem areas, and take corrective action."

The report noted the NIH did not refer the research to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for an "outside review for enhanced potential pandemic pathogens (ePPPs) because it [NIH] determined the research did not involve and was not reasonably anticipated to create, use, or transfer an ePPP."

The OIG concluded:

"NIH missed opportunities to more effectively monitor research. With improved oversight, NIH may have been able to take more timely corrective actions to mitigate the inherent risks associated with this type of research."

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In 2014, [EcoHealth received its first \\$666,442 of a \\$4.3 million](#) grant from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases — under then-Director [Anthony Fauci](#) — to study the risk of bat coronavirus emergence and the potential for outbreaks in human populations.

The research included [genetically manipulating coronaviruses](#) to make them more infectious to humans.

[Emails](#) revealed the [NIH colluded with EcoHealth](#) to circumvent federal restrictions on [GOF research](#) and avoid oversight. At least [two NIH officials](#) expressed concern that the experiment might fall under the designation of GOF experiments banned under a 2014 [federal moratorium](#).

[According to The Intercept](#), Daszak stated in emails that WIV1, the parent of chimeric SARS-like viruses, "has never been demonstrated to infect humans or cause human disease." Yet three months earlier, in March 2016, Daszak's collaborator, Ralph Baric, Ph.D., published a [paper showing WIV1](#) did indeed have the ability to infect humans and posed a threat to the

human population.

In April 2020, under the Trump administration, the NIH terminated EcoHealth's grant over concerns the organization had violated the grant terms, using U.S. taxpayer money to fund [GOF research](#) at the [Wuhan lab](#).

In May, [NIH reinstated its grant to EcoHealth](#) to study the risk of bat coronavirus spillover.

## SUGGEST A CORRECTION

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Monica Dutcher is a Maryland-based senior reporter for The Defender.

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