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Nobel Laureate Tasuku Honjo Refutes Link To 'Man-Made' Coronavirus Claim

2018 Nobel laureate Tasuku Honjo has refuted any link to social media posts that claim the SARS-CoV-2 virus was 'man-made' or 'invented' in a lab.



AsianScientist (Apr. 28, 2020) – Professor [Tasuku Honjo](#), co-awardee of the 2018 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, has refuted any link to social media posts that claim the SARS-CoV-2 virus was 'man-made' or 'invented' in a laboratory.

“In the wake of the pain, economic loss, and unprecedented global suffering caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, I am greatly saddened that my name and that of Kyoto University have been used to spread false accusations and misinformation,” [Honjo said in a statement](#) released by Kyoto University today.

While comparative analysis of genomic data has [shown evidence](#) that SARS-CoV-2 is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus, the notion that the SARS-CoV-2 virus was invented has continued to receive mileage on social media platforms.

“At this stage, when all of our energies are needed to treat the ill, prevent the further spread of sorrow, and plan for a new beginning, the broadcasting of unsubstantiated claims regarding the origins of the disease is dangerously distracting,” Honjo said.

Honjo is currently the deputy director-general and a distinguished professor at the Institute for Advanced Study at Kyoto University, Japan. In 1992, Honjo discovered programmed cell death protein 1 (PD-1), a key player in tumor immunology. He showed that PD-1, a protein expressed on the surface of a subset of immune cells known as T-cells, functions as a brake on T-cell function, and that blocking PD-1 would help to restore T-cell targeting of cancer cells.

The Japanese immunologist’s findings paved the way for the use of PD-1 inhibitors as cancer treatment in human patients. Clinical development ensued, and in 2012 [a key study](#) demonstrated clear efficacy in the treatment of patients with different types of cancer, with patients experiencing long-term remission.

In a 2016 interview with *Asian Scientist Magazine*, Honjo said his [personal philosophy](#) was to show “curiosity, courage and challenge” in his research pursuits. Two years later, Honjo was honored with the Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine for his discovery of PD-1 and its significance to cancer immunotherapy.

“This is a time for all of us, especially those of us devoting our careers to the forefronts of scientific research, to work together to fight this common enemy. We cannot delay one moment in this effort to save the lives of our fellow humans,” Honjo urged.

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