

Virologists call for rational discourse on gain of function research

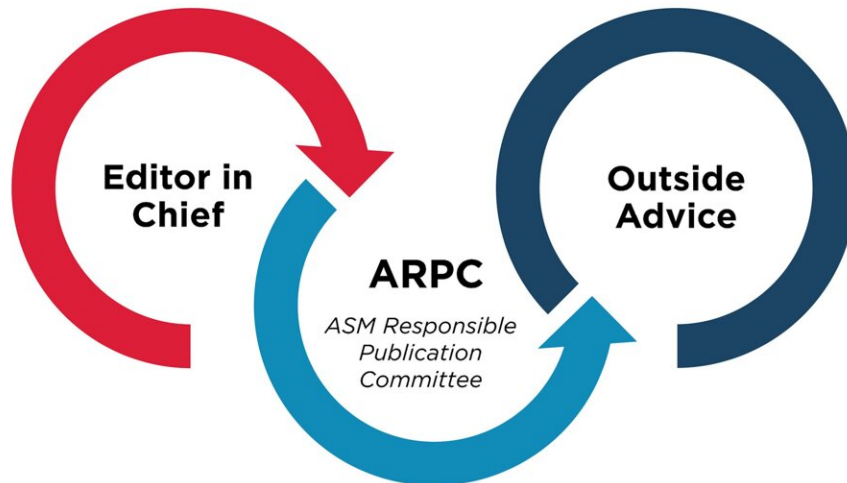
January 26 2023

ASM Journals DURC/GOF/P3 Process

SCREEN

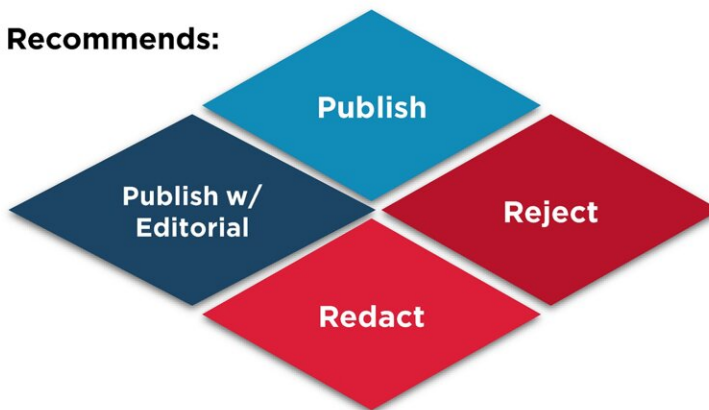


DISCUSS



DECIDE

ARPC Recommends:



Consultations May Include:

- *Corresponding Author*
- *NIH*
- *Institutional Safety Officer*

Publishing process for articles involving gain-of-function research-of-concern or with pathogens of pandemic potential at ASM journals. Articles in the GOF/DURC/P3 category are flagged by multiple layers at the screening stage. This process will initiate discussion among the scientific editor in chief and other subject matter experts and lead to a publication decision after careful consideration of risks and benefits. Credit: *Journal of Virology* (2023). DOI: 10.1128/jvi.00089-23

The study of viruses is under renewed scrutiny, say more than 150 experts in a new commentary published today in *mSphere*, *mBio* and the *Journal of Virology*, all journals of the American Society for Microbiology

The commentary's authors call on [policymakers](#) to recognize the need for more rational discourse around the future of [virology](#). They implore a more nuanced, evidence-based discussion around gain of function research and provide evidence to support the benefits of this type of research for human health. These concerns are especially focused on enhanced potential pandemic pathogen (ePPP) research and dual use research of concern (DURC).

"To respond rapidly to emerging viral threats we must be able to apply modern biology tools to viruses which will ensure that we reduce the burden of future disease outbreaks," said Felicia Goodrum, Ph.D., co-Editor-in-Chief of ASM's *Journal of Virology*.

The current debate regarding the origin of SARS-CoV-2 pandemic is partly due to a theory that suggests it may have been caused by an accidental or intentional lab leak. However, evidence strongly suggests that the virus originated from zoonotic transmission, through the transfer of the virus from wild animals to humans.

Despite this, a narrative against this valuable research tool has developed, putting the field of virology at risk, despite its critical role in preparing humanity to fight threats posed by viruses.

"Research on dangerous pathogens does require oversight, but we must be careful to not overly restrict the ability of scientists to generate the knowledge needed to protect ourselves from these pathogens," said Michael Imperiale, Ph.D., a professor with the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Michigan Medical School and Editor-in-Chief of ASM's journal *mSphere*.

As policymakers take a renewed look at policies surrounding gain of function research, the authors state, the abundance of existing oversight around virology research should be considered and a concerted effort to avoid redundant measures should be implemented.

Gain of function research and regulations around [virus](#) research is the subject of a meeting by the National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity to be held on January 27, which has released draft findings and recommendations.

"It is critical that [policy makers](#), virologists, and biosafety experts work together to ensure that research is conducted safely, with the [common goal](#) of reducing the burden of disease caused by viruses," said Seema Lakdawala, Ph.D., an associate professor with the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at Emory University.

More information: Felicia Goodrum et al, Virology under the Microscope—a Call for Rational Discourse, *mSphere* (2023). [DOI: 10.1128/msphere.00034-23](https://doi.org/10.1128/msphere.00034-23)

Felicia Goodrum et al, Virology under the Microscope—a Call for Rational Discourse, *mBio* (2023). [DOI: 10.1128/mbio.00188-23](https://doi.org/10.1128/mbio.00188-23)

Felicia Goodrum et al, Virology under the Microscope—a Call for Rational Discourse, *Journal of Virology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1128/jvi.00089-23](https://doi.org/10.1128/jvi.00089-23)

Provided by American Society for Microbiology

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