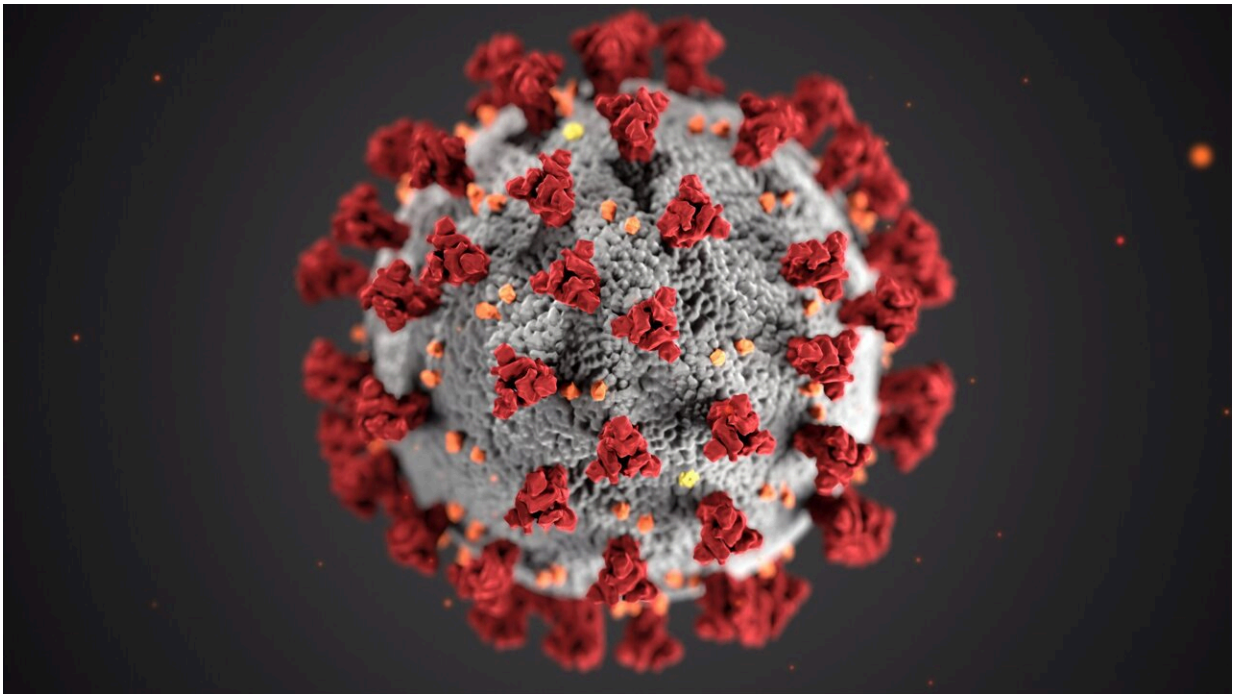


Doctor who exposed China's 2003 SARS cover-up dies at 91

March 15 2023



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

The doctor who exposed China's cover-up of the SARS epidemic in 2003 has died aged 91, his family confirmed on Wednesday.

Jiang Yanyong, then a doctor in a Beijing military hospital, angered authorities when he informed foreign [media](#) of China's attempts to downplay the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome,

revealing the existence of hundreds of previously hidden cases.

His [funeral](#) was held on Wednesday morning, said Jiang's daughter-in-law Cui Hong, who told AFP she was "not allowed" to attend the ceremony, and declined to provide further details on his death. He reportedly died on Saturday.

SARS went on to kill more than 800 people worldwide, and China's government came under fierce international criticism for initially covering up the fact that the disease emerged in the south of the country.

Jiang later spent eight months under house arrest after publicly denouncing the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, during which the military crushed weeks of student-led democracy protests, killing hundreds and possibly thousands.

Jiang, a member of the Chinese Communist Party, sent a letter to then-premier Wen Jiabao in 2004 calling for an official reassessment of the incident.

The whistleblower faced a host of restrictions towards the end of his life and was barred from travelling to the United States in 2007 to accept a human rights award.

There was no coverage in mainland China's censored media of Jiang's death, though a handful of social media users posted tributes on the popular Weibo platform.

"He was a doctor who dared to speak the truth," wrote one Weibo user.

Information about disasters and public health crises is still tightly controlled in authoritarian China.

In December 2019, a group of doctors in Wuhan were reprimanded by police for spreading "rumours" after they warned on social media of a new SARS-like disease—COVID-19—spreading through the central Chinese city.

Ophthalmologist Li Wenliang, one of the doctors summoned by police, later died of COVID, unleashing a wave of public anger.

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