



Faculty of Veterinary Medicine,
University of Teramo, 64100 Teramo,
Italy

gdiguardo@unite.it

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2021;374:n1719

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n1719>

Published: 14 July 2021

COVID-19 LEADERSHIP FAILURES, NATIONAL AND GLOBAL

No veterinarians (yet) on the Italian covid-19 scientific committee

Giovanni Di Guardo *past professor of general pathology and veterinary pathophysiology*

The challenges and uncertainties of covid-19 continue.¹ As a retired veterinary pathologist, with almost 20 years of academic and teaching experience in general pathology and veterinary pathophysiology, I feel great discomfort that not a single veterinarian sits on the Italian Scientific and Technical Committee for the Covid-19 Pandemic.

This committee, popularly known by the acronym CTS (Comitato Tecnico Scientifico), was officially established in Italy in February 2020, when it was composed of 20 expert members. In March 2021, its composition was modified by an ad hoc legislative measure, and 12 experts were officially appointed as its members. Although CTS was born shortly after the covid-19 epidemic was officially declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization, with its causative agent—SARS-CoV-2—presumably originating from an animal source and being additionally capable of jumping from infected humans into animals (cats, dogs, lions, tigers, gorillas, minks, and so on), vets were not and aren't yet part of the CTS.

This is a big mistake for several reasons. Even though the origin of SARS-CoV-2 is still debated, its SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV “predecessors” originated from an animal source. At least 70% of emerging infectious diseases have either a proved or suspected animal origin. The dramatic SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has unequivocally taught us, once again, that human, animal, and environmental health are linked to each other, a concept clearly exemplified by the “one health” principle. Experimental and natural animal models of infection are greatly advancing our understanding of SARS-CoV-2 infection's pathogenesis.²

It's hard to believe that more than 16 months since its inception, there isn't room for a single veterinarian on the Italian CTS.

Competing interests: None declared.

1 Godlee F. Covid-19: Failures of leadership, national and global. *BMJ* 2021;373:n1540doi: 10.1136/bmj.n1540.

2 Casalone C, Di Guardo G. Covid-19 and mad cow disease: so different, yet so similar[electronic response to Tian H et al. An investigation of transmission control measures during the first 50 days of the COVID-19 epidemic in China]. *Science* 2020.<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/368/6491/638/tab-e-letters>

This article is made freely available for use in accordance with BMJ's website terms and conditions for the duration of the covid-19 pandemic or until otherwise determined by BMJ. You may use, download and print the article for any lawful, non-commercial purpose (including text and data mining) provided that all copyright notices and trade marks are retained.