ARREST THEM NOW: Government-funded Lab in Maryland Plans to Develop Hybrid Monkeypox Strain that is More Lethal than Previous Strains

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367 Comments

Last week, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced to launch an investigation into the new COVID strain research being conducted at Boston University, which has shown an 80% fatality rate in infected mice.

This comes after the top NIH director **admitted** that she only learned of the details from the news media reports.

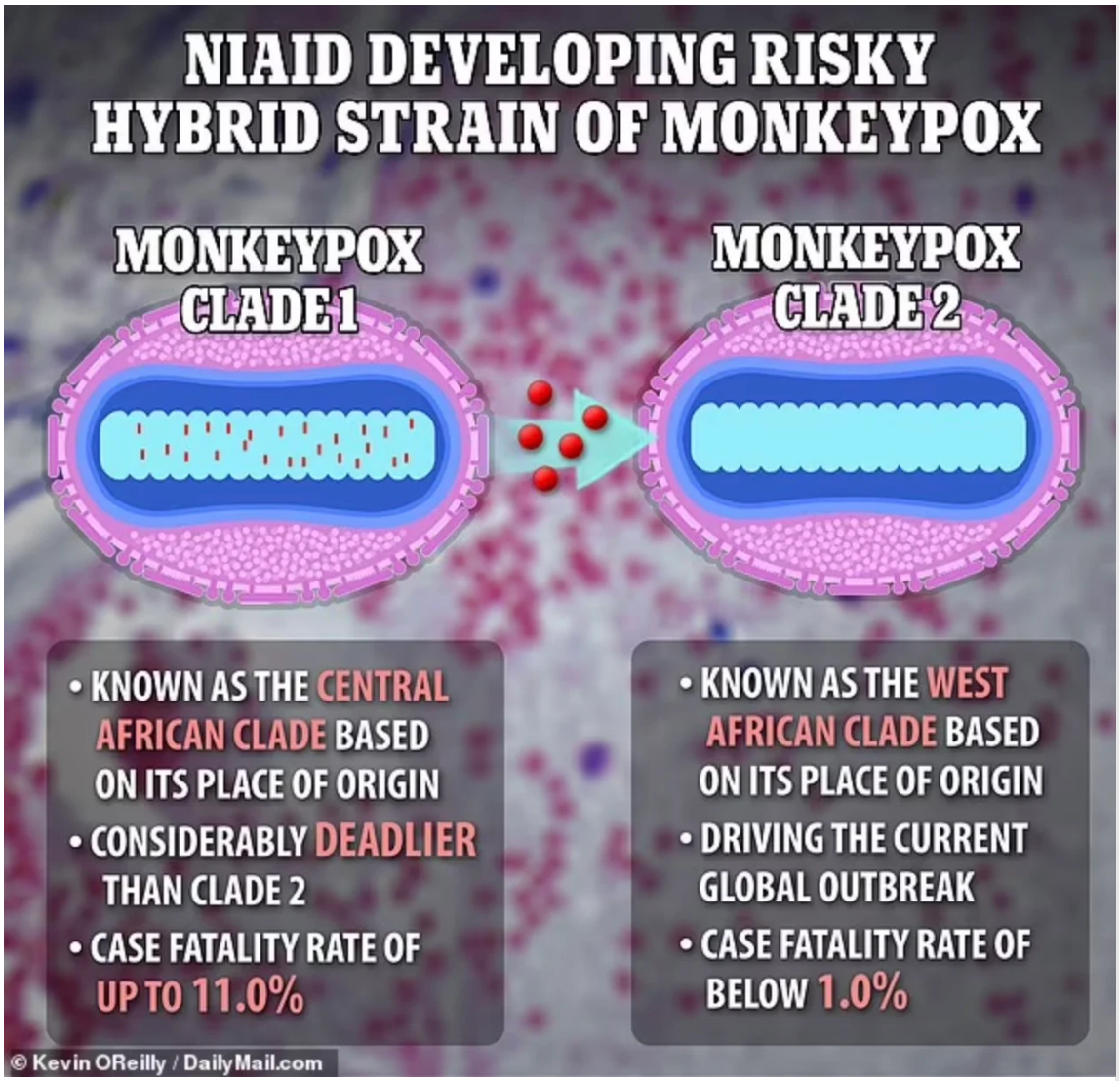
Dr. Emily Erbelding, a director at the NIAID division of microbiology and infectious diseases, admitted that she was unaware of the details of the research.

She said the researchers at Boston University did not clear the work with the NIAID, making the research unauthorized.

Erbedling claimed the university did not inform NIAID.

Now, American scientists are experimenting with another virus just weeks before the midterm.

New reports from **Science** revealed that virus experts at a government lab in Bethesda, Maryland, are planning to conduct an experiment to swap genes between two strains of monkeypox, one that causes more severe sickness and the other that causes large rashes and flu-like symptoms.



Source: Daily Mail

Why is this even being created?

According to the report, the virologists plan to test to determine if the mutation between two strains makes the virus more deadly to mice.

Researchers are hopeful that if they can figure out how certain genes contribute to the severity of monkeypox, they might create more effective treatments and vaccines.

Some scientists express concern over the planned experiments. Epidemiologist and the director of the Center for Health Security at the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, Thomas Inglesby, worry that an “epidemic with substantially more

lethality" could happen if a more dangerous strain of monkeypox manages to break out of a high-containment facility at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID).

Because of the possibility that these experiments could start a disastrous pandemic, Inglesby and other scientists have argued that the experiments should undergo a special review normally reserved for the most high-risk U.S. government-funded research projects.

"It's not clear that the rules apply to the proposed study. In a 2018, a safety panel determined it was exempt from review. Monkeypox did not meet the definition of a "potential pandemic pathogen" (PPP), the panel decided, because it didn't spread easily. Now, with monkeypox widespread, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is planning to reexamine the work, but it still might not qualify as "enhancing" a PPP, the agency says. That's because the study will swap natural mutations, not create new ones, so it is not expected to create a monkeypox strain more virulent than the two already known," Science reported.

More from **Daily Mail**:

> The latest monkeypox study is being funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), a research arm of National Institutes of Health (NIH).
>
> But the modified virus 'poses an exceptionally high risk' to the public if it accidentally leaks, according to Dr Richard Ebright, a microbiologist at Rutgers University in New Jersey.
>
> The team in Maryland would argue their work does not involve 'enhancing' a pathogen because they are swapping natural mutations rather than creating new ones, meaning the hybrid cannot be more deadly than the existing clades.

But the news will no doubt surprise many Americans that such research continues to go on in the US despite fears similar practices may have started the pandemic.

The Maryland team's work is being led by NIAID scientist Bernard Moss at the agency's headquarters in Bethesda.

This phase of the study will involve extracting dozens genes from the more severe clade 1 monkeypox virus and putting them into the milder clade 2 virus.

They will then infect mice with the hybrid virus and monitor how the disease progresses.

The team had initially attempted the reverse: swapping genetic materials in the less virulent clade into clade 1 to make it less deadly, but without success.

The current global outbreak is confirmed to be driven by clade 2, the less deadly West African monkeypox strain, which has a mortality rate of less than one percent.

Clade 1, meanwhile, kills one in 10 people it infects. It has its origins in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and primarily spreads in the Congo Basin.

Read more **here**.

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