

Video: Avian Bird Flu, New Strains of the Flu Virus: Let's Fight Global Pandemics by Maybe Starting One?

By [Thomas Gaulkin](#)

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Feed a cold, starve a fever ... mutate the flu?

A couple of labs in Wisconsin and The Netherlands have been given the green light to do controversial work with a deadly strain of avian flu that kills two thirds of the people it infects.

The scientific community and US government declared a moratorium on the experiments in 2014. Why? Because the virus has generally been confined to birds, and these labs are trying to make it transmissible to mammals. On purpose.

The researchers say making new strains of the H5N1 flu virus in a secure lab can help them see what might happen naturally in the real world. Sounds logical, but many scientists oppose it because the facts show most biosafety labs [aren't really secure at all](#), and experts say the risks of a mutated virus escaping outweigh whatever public health benefit comes from creating them.

But now the US government is funding these same labs again to artificially enhance potentially pandemic pathogens.

Say *WHAT?*

In this installment of the *Bulletin's* [video series](#) that provides a sharp view of fuzzy policy, Johns Hopkins University computational biologist Steven Salzberg explains why arguments by researchers in favor of risky viral research aren't persuasive.

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