# Global Covid vaccine safety study halted prematurely due to major US funding cuts



The Global Vaccine Data Network, one of the largest international efforts to assess the safety of Covid-19 vaccines, has been abruptly halted nearly halfway through its planned five-year duration due to significant funding cuts originating from the United States. The project, which began in 2019 under the leadership of vaccinologists Helen Petousis-Harris from New Zealand and Steven Black from the United States, had leveraged data from over 300 million people worldwide to produce some of the most comprehensive studies on vaccine efficacy and safety.

Hosted by the University of Auckland, the network collaborates with multiple institutions and experts globally, contributing essential research aimed at evaluating vaccine effectiveness, analysing risks and benefits, and addressing vaccine hesitancy. The project received more than NZ$10 million in funding from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2021, supporting its extensive research activities.

However, recent sweeping cuts implemented by the US government, specifically through the Department of Government Efficiency (Doge), have forced an untimely termination of the study. Helen Petousis-Harris described the funding withdrawal as sudden and unplanned, stating to The Guardian, “Funding for the global Covid vaccine safety project was suddenly cut … without warning, without planning.” These cuts are part of a broader wave of budget reductions to scientific and governmental agencies, including the CDC, the Food and Drug Administration, and the National Institutes of Health, resulting in approximately 10,000 job losses as of 1 April.

The financial shortfall has created a gap of roughly US$2 million needed to complete the vaccine safety project. Despite efforts, no alternative government or philanthropic funders have yet stepped in, leaving the future of this vital research uncertain. Petousis-Harris warned that the loss of such research infrastructure could have wider consequences, explaining, “The impact of the Trump administration to withdraw such vast amounts of funding globally is almost hard to articulate,” and highlighting concerns that reducing authoritative scientific voices might enable the proliferation of vaccine misinformation.

UniServices, the commercial arm of the University of Auckland responsible for supporting the network's research, confirmed the immediate cessation of funding by the CDC. Dr Greg Murison, executive director of UniServices, stated, “Recently the CDC informed UniServices that that funding for the [project] would cease with immediate effect. We are now in the process of consolidating and securing the data and material created on vaccine safety and research the [project] has collated since 2019.” He also noted that while some associated projects will continue due to separate funding arrangements, the global Covid vaccine safety study could not proceed further without renewed financial support.

The New Zealand Ministry of Health acknowledged awareness of the funding termination but confirmed they had not received any formal requests to provide financial assistance to continue the study.

This development marks a significant disruption to one of the world’s largest vaccine safety investigations, raising questions about the future capacity for large-scale, multinational vaccine research efforts amid changing funding landscapes.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://sph.umich.edu/news/2025posts/a-ripple-effect-of-cutting-global-vaccine-programs.html> - This article discusses the implications of US funding cuts on global vaccine programs, highlighting their cost-effectiveness and the potential for undermining public health infrastructure.
2. <https://healthpolicy-watch.news/grim-global-effects-of-us-funds-withdrawal/> - The article outlines the global impact of US funding withdrawal, particularly on WHO's budget, which faces a 25% reduction, mirroring the broader challenges faced by large-scale projects like the Global Vaccine Data Network.
3. <https://www.commondreams.org/news/trump-vaccine> - This piece covers the effects of US funding cuts on Gavi, a vaccine alliance, and how such cuts can lead to significant gaps in vaccination coverage, similar to the funding issues faced by the Global Vaccine Data Network.
4. <https://www.noahwire.com> - This is the source of the original information regarding the Global Vaccine Data Network, including details about its abrupt halt due to US funding cuts.
5. <http://www.auckland.ac.nz/uniservices> - UniServices, the commercial arm of the University of Auckland, plays a key role in supporting research projects like the Global Vaccine Data Network, which was impacted by funding cuts.
6. <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/index.html> - The CDC provides funding and support for various vaccine-related research projects. Its funding cuts have impacted initiatives such as the Global Vaccine Data Network.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/apr/24/global-covid-vaccine-data-nework-safety-doge-funding-cuts> - Please view link - unable to able to access data