

May the Force Be With You—Predatory Journals Caught in Star Wars Sting

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There have been some concerns that peer review is lacking in some science journals. Some of the predatory journals collect publishing fees without doing any peer review. Often, these will be newer open access journals. To make a point, one author submitted a spoof manuscript that led to predatory journals being caught in this sting.

Star Wars-Themed Spoof Paper

The absurd paper was based on a fake scientific study entitled “Mitochondria: Structure, Function, and Clinical Relevance.” Neuroskeptic (a blogger) wrote the paper and admitted to copying a Wikipedia entry on mitochondria and replacing “mitochondria” with “midi-chlorians” in the text. As true Star Wars fans will tell you, [midi-chlorians](#) are tiny intelligent life forms that live inside the cells of all living creatures. Midi-chlorians exist in symbiosis with their hosts. The Force speaks to people through midi-chlorians.

Dr. Lucas McGeorge and Dr. Annette Kin authored the spoof manuscript. (George Lucas created Star Wars and Anakin Skywalker is Darth Vader.) The *International Journal of Molecular Biology: Open Access*, *Austin Journal of Pharmacology* and

Therapeutics, and the *American Research Journal of Biosciences* published the paper. All four journals have since removed the paper from their sites. Fortunately, Neuroskeptic [shared some of the text](#), which includes statements like:

- “Beyond supplying cellular energy, midichloria perform functions such as Force sensitivity...”
- “Involved in ATP production is the citric acid cycle, also referred to as the Kytorein cycle after its discoverer”
- “Midi-chlorians are microscopic life-forms that reside in all living cells—without the midi-chlorians, life couldn’t exist, and we’d have no knowledge of the Force. Midichlorial disorders often erupt as brain diseases, such as autism.”
- “midichloria DNA (mtDNRey)” and “ReyTP”.

These kinds of statements in this fake Star Wars-themed paper should have made it impossible for this paper to be assigned for peer review by a scientific editor. Instead, this Star Wars sting was successful with four journals accepting the midichloria paper. (The *American Journal of Medical and Biological Research* accepted the paper but required a \$360 fee.)

This absurd Star Wars paper even explained that it was a spoof in the methods section. Neuroskeptic explains, “The majority of the text of this paper was Rogeted [7]”. Reference 7 cited an article on Rogeting followed by “The majority of the text in the current paper was Rogeted from Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitochondrion>. Apologies to the original authors of that page.”

Neuroskeptic’s Star Wars sting highlights how essential peer review is. Predatory journals are often only concerned with publication fees. These may be open access journals but there have also been [traditional journals](#) that are fake. True science journals rely on peer review so usually, only predatory journals are affected. This Star Wars-themed spoof paper is a reminder of what can happen without meaningful peer review.

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