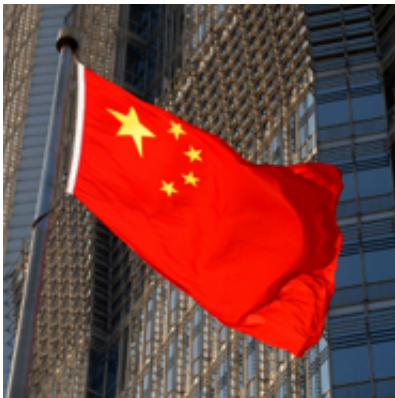


Investigation reveals black market in China for research paper authoring

November 29 2013, by Bob Yirka



(Phys.org) —The journal *Science* has uncovered, via investigation, a thriving black market in science paper authoring—people are paying to have their names added to papers that have been written to describe research efforts. Mara Hvistendahl was the lead investigator and author of a paper published by *Science*, describing the operation and what was found.

There have been reports of unscrupulous journals printing [research papers](#) without proper vetting, and other reports suggesting that there exists a [black market](#) in [paper](#) authorship. This new investigation by *Science*, is the first to publish direct evidence of such a black market operating in China. Hvistendahl reports on one instance where a

suspected black-marketeer was contacted to inquire about having a name applied to an existing research paper. The contact quoted different prices for having a name included, depending on whether the person paying wished to be listed as the primary writer, or as merely a co-author, or even as just one of the team members. No money changed hands, as that would have been unethical for a *Science* reporter, but Hvistendahl reports that the paper that had been part of the earlier investigation showed up at a later date published in a reputable journal, along with different names attributed to the research effort—names of people that had all bought their way on.

Hvistendahl notes that such a black market has arisen in China due to the enormous pressure Chinese researchers are feeling to publish something. In that country, it appears having one's name attached to a research paper, matters more than actually conducting research. Hvistendahl also reports that people in China are willing to pay tens of thousands of dollars for the "honor" of having their name printed as an author on a research paper.

Hvistendahl writes that *Science's* undercover investigation revealed a thriving black market in China for paper authorization, which includes "shady agencies, corrupt scientists, and compromised editors." The undercover operation was conducted over a five month period and resulted in numerous examples of people at all levels of research in China participating in the black market in one way or another. They also found that it was possible to pay for someone to write a paper, attach a name and then submit and have it published in a reputable international journal—so long as the research it described passed a traditional vetting process.

The investigative team also found doctors and others engaged in medical research that were willing to openly admit that the black market for research papers is thriving in China. All in all, the investigative team

contacted 27 agencies involved in helping researchers get their work published—only five of them refused an offer to pay for adding a name to a research paper.

More information: China's Publication Bazaar, *Science* 29 November 2013: Vol. 342 no. 6162 pp. 1035-1039. [DOI: 10.1126/science.342.6162.1035](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.342.6162.1035)

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