

Scientists urge top publisher to withdraw faulty climate study

September 27 2022, by Marlowe HOOD, Roland LLOYD-PARRY, Patrick GALEY



The study purports to review data on possible changes in the frequency or intensity of rainfall, cyclones, tornadoes, droughts and other extreme weather events.

A fundamentally flawed study claiming that scientific evidence of a climate crisis is lacking should be withdrawn from the peer-reviewed journal in which it was published, top climate scientists have told AFP.

Appearing earlier this year in *The European Physical Journal Plus*, published by Springer Nature, the study purports to review data on possible changes in the frequency or intensity of rainfall, cyclones, tornadoes, droughts and other extreme weather events.

It has been viewed thousands of times on social media and cited by some mainstream media, such as Sky News Australia.

"On the basis of observation data, the climate crisis that, according to many sources, we are experiencing today, is not evident," reads the summary of the 20-page study.

Four prominent climate scientists contacted by AFP all said the study—of which they had been unaware—grossly manipulates data, cherry picking some facts and ignoring others that would contradict their discredited assertions.

"The paper gives the appearance of being specifically written to make the case that there is no climate crisis, rather than presenting an objective, comprehensive, up-to-date assessment," said Richard Betts, Head of Climate Impacts Research at Britain's Met Office.

The authors ignore the authoritative Intergovernmental Report on Climate Change (IPCC) report published a couple of months before their study was submitted to Springer Nature, Betts noted.

"Human-induced climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe," the IPCC concluded in that report.

"Evidence of observed changes in extremes such as heatwaves, heavy precipitation, droughts and tropical cyclones, and, in particular, their attribution to human influence, has strengthened" since the previous report eight years earlier, it said.

"They are writing this article in bad faith," said Friederike Otto, a senior climatologist at the Grantham Institute for Climate Change and the Environment.

'Climate sceptics'

"They do not have a section on heat waves"—mentioned only in passing—"where the observed trends are so incredibly obvious", Otto said.

The peer-reviewed paper by four Italian scientists appeared in January 2022 in one of the more than 2,000 journals published by Springer Nature, one of the most prestigious science publishers in the world.

When asked to explain how a study so clearly at odds with current climate science could have passed peer review and been published, Springer Nature said: "We can't comment at this time."

Lead author Gianluca Alimonti is a physicist at a nuclear physics institute. The three co-authors are Luigi Mariani, an agricultural meteorologist, and the physicists Franco Prodi and Renato Angelo Ricci.

The study is written "by people not working in climatology and obviously unfamiliar with the topic and relevant data," said Stefan Rahmstorf, Head of Earth Systems at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research.

"It is not published in a climate journal—this is a common avenue taken

by 'climate sceptics' in order to avoid peer review by real experts in the field."

"They simply ignore studies that don't fit their narrative and have come to the opposite conclusion."

All four of the experts consulted by AFP suggested that the study should never have been published in the first place, and two of them called for it to be withdrawn.

"I do not know this journal, but if it is a self-respecting one it should withdraw the article," said Rahmstorf.

Peter Cox, a professor of climate system dynamics at the University of Exeter, said the study "isn't good scientifically", but feared that striking the article from the journal would "lead to further publicity and could be presented as censorship".

Otto shared this concern, but said the study should be repudiated all the same.

"If the journal cares about science they should withdraw it loudly and publicly, saying that it should not have been published."

Betts stopped short of calling for withdrawal, drawing a distinction between cherry-picking data and outright fraud.

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