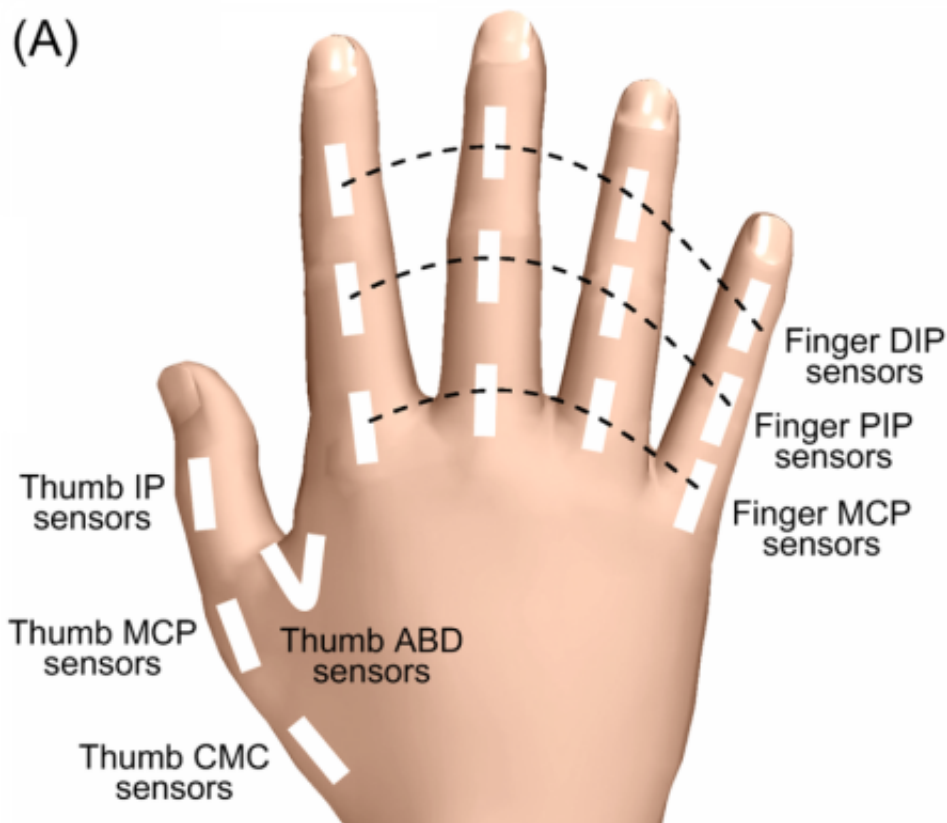


Paper on PLOS ONE creates a firestorm by referencing "the Creator"

March 4 2016, by Bob Yirka



Credit: PLOS ONE

A trio of researchers from China has caused a stir in the technical publishing arena by including some verbiage in a paper published in the open-source journal *PLOS ONE* that appears to mention creationism as a part of their scientific endeavor. Due to an extremely negative response,

PLOS ONE has retracted the article.

At its core, the paper is a report on an examination the researchers conducted of the human hand—how it is that it is so dexterous and offers so much freedom of control, etc. But in their abstract, they included these words: "...is the proper design by the Creator..."

The mention of "the Creator" has been interpreted by many as an allusion to God and creationism, which most in the [scientific community](#) see as scientifically invalid. Many have taken to [social media](#) to voice their displeasure regarding the apparent "mistake" by the editors, some suggesting that it appeared that the paper had not been peer-reviewed as is supposed to be the case with *PLOS ONE*, which adds credence to arguments suggesting open-access sites are not offering readers the same degree of quality as pay-wall sites. Others suggest that it might perhaps have been nothing more than a language problem—the authors and editors of the paper are all native Chinese speakers, and indeed, a report suggests that the authors meant to use a synonym for "nature" but somehow found "creator" instead.

Thus far, most media outlets have sided with the outraged readership, insisting that such papers have no place in the science arena, though some have joked about the pitchfork mentality of the virtual mob, looking for proper vengeance. What appears to be still missing, however, are the few small voices that find such outrage by science fanatics as ominous; those that call for the persecution of heretics like people of a former time; or those noting that many papers are published in respected journals that rely to some degree on improbable reasoning—Einstein and his "spooky action at a distance," for example. And other papers make their points by citing the existence of dark matter or dark energy as possible explanations for whatever they are studying, which for now at least, must be taken on faith.

More information: Ming-Jin Liu et al. Biomechanical Characteristics of Hand Coordination in Grasping Activities of Daily Living, *PLOS ONE* (2016). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0146193](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0146193)

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Citation: Paper on PLOS ONE creates a firestorm by referencing "the Creator" (2016, March 4) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-03-paper-plos-firestorm-referencing-creator.html>

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