

40,000 CNY and 5 days, you can have a complete manuscript, with guaranteed acceptance

Buying papers from paper mills is not an unfamiliar practice in academic community. Even if you and your colleagues have never done it, you have probably heard of such things. So how much does it actually cost to buy a paper from a paper mill? And how many days does it take to receive a finished manuscript?

Recently, the 5GH Team found the answers while chatting with someone believed to be from a paper mill in China.



This paper-mill operative was peddling papers on RedNote (a Chinese social media platform). The 5GH Team approached him under the pretext of buying a paper. He claimed he could write a review manuscript for the Team and submit it to Frontiers in Immunology. During the conversation, he said the manuscript could be completed in about five days and asked for a fee of 40,000 CNY. Of that, 2,000 CNY would be a deposit, with the remainder to be collected after the manuscript was accepted. He guaranteed the Team that the manuscript would definitely be accepted. To back this up, he claimed to have "connections" with the editorial team of Frontiers in Immunology and said he would need to pay them some bribes in exchange for their help.



During the exchange, the paper-mill operative revealed to the 5GH Team that he had written manuscripts for more than a dozen clients and successfully had them published in Frontiers in Immunology. To prove this claim, he showed the team screenshots of two email exchanges with the journal during the submission process (the paper-related information in the images was redacted).



The operative also mentioned that earlier, he had transferred three manuscripts originally submitted to Frontiers in Nutrition to other clients. Moreover, he indicated that he still had three completed

manuscripts on hand that could be transferred, one of which was ready to be submitted to npj Digital Medicine.



The 5GH team has so far been unable to verify his claimed "connections" with the journals or his alleged successful submissions and sales. However, the team is shocked that such advertisements are pervasive on Chinese social media. Whether these ads represent real paper mills or are fraudulent scams, they run counter to the fundamental baseline that social media platforms should uphold.

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