



Opening Statement of Chairman Rich McCormick

Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee Hearing
The State of Scientific Publishing: Assessing Trends, Emerging Issues, and Policy Considerations
April 15, 2026

Good morning. Thank you all for being here today.

We are addressing a challenge that sits at the heart of American scientific leadership—a challenge that demands honest scrutiny of the systems we rely on to produce and validate knowledge.

Science advances through trust. Everything we do rests on the assumption that the underlying work is real, rigorous, and honestly reported.

I know the importance of this firsthand. From my time at med school to practicing in the emergency room, my career has been based on published research and its credibility.

Our actions are based on trust — be it when a policymaker acts on published evidence, or when a federal agency directs billions in funding to specific research.

That foundation is under threat, and it is the job of this Committee to understand why.

The scientific publishing ecosystem has changed dramatically.

What was once a straightforward process of peer review and dissemination has become a complex, commercialized marketplace with misaligned incentives and bad actors willing to exploit them.

Now consider the scale of the problem. Estimates suggest that over 400,000 published studies worldwide may originate from so-called paper mills—operations that produce fabricated or manipulated manuscripts for a fee.

In 2023 alone, Wiley, a prominent American publisher, retracted over 8,000 fraudulent papers from a single subsidiary.

That is not an anomaly— it's a symptom. The incentive structures driving this are well understood, but under-addressed.

Academic careers are built on publication counts. Institutions compete on research output.

The result is a "publish or perish" culture that rewards quantity over quality—and creates a ready market for shortcuts.

When speed and quantity displace rigor and reproducibility, it is not just individual researchers who are harmed. It is the integrity of the scientific record itself.

Federal taxpayer dollars support the research that feeds this system.

If fraudulent publications are being cited in grant applications that shape the direction of federal policy, American taxpayers will end up subsidizing the corruption of the very science they are paying to advance.

Meanwhile, the Chinese Communist Party has built an academic incentive structures that has generated an industrial-scale paper mill problem.

Chinese universities have reportedly paid authors substantial cash rewards for publications in prestigious journals.

A survey of medical residents at hospitals in southwest China found that nearly half admitted to buying papers, selling papers, or hiring ghostwriters to meet publication requirements.

Critically, this fabricated research does not stay in China—it enters Western journals, shapes citations, and contaminates the global scientific literature on which researchers depend on.

The rise of artificial intelligence intensifies all of this.

AI lowers the cost and technical barrier to generating plausible-looking scientific content at scale.

The same tools that can accelerate legitimate research can be weaponized to fabricate data, manufacture citations, and flood the publication pipeline with content that appears credible but is not.

As these capabilities grow, the gap between what looks like science and what is science will only widen—unless institutions, publishers, and federal agencies act deliberately to close it.

Open access mandates, which this Committee has engaged with extensively, add another layer of complexity.

The movement to make federally funded research freely available is a worthy goal, but the article processing charge model used to make this financially feasible creates its own distortions.

This model incentivizes publishers to prioritize quantity over quality, disadvantaging smaller institutions, and enabling predatory journals that collect fees while providing no meaningful peer review.

The agencies under this Committee's jurisdiction have begun responding.

Following letters sent by this Committee earlier this year, agencies are developing award conditions that can lead to suspension or termination of funding when integrity requirements are not met.

That is a positive development, and we want to understand how those efforts are progressing.

But agency action has limits, and the structural pressures faced by this industry require a more comprehensive response.

This Committee's responsibility is to ensure that federal investments in science are protected, that the research enterprise maintains the credibility it requires to function, and that American institutions are not disadvantaged by competitors who treat scientific integrity as optional.

That is the purpose of today's hearing. Our witnesses can help us understand both the depth of the problem and what meaningful solutions look like.

I look forward to a serious and substantive discussion.