

Genetically engineered killer zombie mice? Not quite

Neuroscientists at Yale University published [a paper](#) [On Jan. 12, 2017,] in the journal *Cell* showing how they could trigger a mouse's predatory instincts with a clever genetic trick. Key word: instinct. They're not engineering mice to be mindless killers, roaming cages in search of their next target. They're prompting the mice to do something they already do in the wild: hunt.

And yes, they did turn the mice into unusually efficient hunters,...[b]ut it's a totally natural instinct that wild mice have to have in order to survive—we just don't normally observe it, because we see mice in cages chowing on food pellets.

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One of the most powerful, technologically-advanced tools in the neurobiology arsenal is a technique [called optogenetics, which], when described broadly, sounds a lot like mind-control.

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To use optogenetics to activate a mouse's predatory instinct is as simple as identifying a set of neurons that are sufficient to trigger the predatory behavior. This helps scientists understand how the brain controls hunting. It doesn't make mice into zombies.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [No, Scientists Didn't Turn Mice Into Killer Zombies](#)