

PREDATORY JOURNALS AND OPEN ACCESS PUBLISHING

Predatory journals and open access journals are now the scourge of the scientific community.

What are Predatory Journals?

These are the journals that publish articles without the time-honored process of peer review. On submission, these journals almost immediately accept these articles for publishing. The author gleefully accepts the offer to publish and then the demand for the steep fee to publish this work is sent to the author. The working process of predatory journals is extremely opaque; their editorial boards are often filled with eminent names who not only have **not** consented to have their names placed there, but are also **completely unaware** that their names are placed on these so-called editorial boards. It is only when the steep publishing fee is revealed to the naïve scientist who is the author that the trap is sprung. If the author pleads inability to afford such a steep fees and requests for withdrawing the article, the author's request will be rejected. The journal will also refuse to allow the author to publish elsewhere. A series of negotiations take place where the author negotiates the fee for which the work can be published.

Should the author request a reprint, then this is done on the most inexpensive paper and again at a fee.

Are these Legitimate Activities?

They are NOT legitimate. The Federal Trade Commission, USA, on the 3rd April, 2019, won a \$50 million court judgment against a predatory open access journal publisher.

The charges were:

- It misled scientists on a variety of reasons,
- It did not disclose publishing fees beforehand, and
- Furthermore, refused to allow authors to withdraw their submissions and also prevented these authors from submitting their work elsewhere.

How common is the Problem of Predatory Journals?

It is now extremely common. Most authors will likely receive many solicitations from such journals to publish their work in the course of their academic careers. Usually, these requests will be couched in such flattering terms like "your reputation as an esteemed scientist precedes you" and "we look forward to publishing your amazing and valuable work" and so on. Once the gullible author submits, he then gets trapped in demands for payment. Even if payment is made the chances of it getting published are remote.

How does an Author Identify a Predatory Journal?

Here are some helpful tips that were created by Jeffrey Beall:

- No specific identifiable person as the journal's editor. No specific editorial board as can be found in all peer-reviewed journals.
- If, at all, the editor is identified, then that individual will likely possess expertise not related to the field and scope of the journal. The same will hold true for the editorial board of that journal. For example, the editor will likely hold a degree in chemistry but will be the editor for a journal dealing with astronomy.
- It will not provide information regarding the charges for publishing in that journal beforehand. The charges will be sprung on the author once the paper is submitted and then accepted for publication in an astonishingly short span of time.
- No Index status at all. This is a very important clue.
- The stated mission of the journal does not conform with the name of the journal.
- Poorly maintained websites, frequent grammatical mistakes, dead links, and gibberish.
- Illegal reproduction of images and content from other journals and other sources.
- Extravagant unsubstantiated claims.
- Abysmal proofreading.

Check if the publisher is a member of COPE, DOAJ, OASPA.

Check the Pubmed status and other Indices of the Journal.

Check with other senior and more experienced colleagues who have a good track record of publishing.

Predatory journals are like fake news. It dilutes the scientific ethos of validation through peer review. The low value quality of the publications creates doubt in some scientific minds and institutions.

It is worthwhile reading the articles given in the references (1-4) below.

REFERENCES

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