

PREDATORY PUBLISHERS

Are You the Next Meal?



Deception in publishing is real.
Only use reputable publishers.

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Respectful, gracious and so flattering that it stopped short of addressing me as “Your Majesty,” the e-mail from a famous-sounding journal spoke about the tremendous impact my work has had in the professional community. Publishing my critical insights in their open access, peer-reviewed journal, the e-mail assured me, was essential to the world of geriatrics! Furthermore, I would have an answer within five to seven days and would be guaranteed publication. The next morning, I received an invitation to add my name to the board of an “esteemed” new journal in nephrology.

Really? My specialty areas are parent-child nursing, health promotion and leadership – not geriatrics or nephrology. Looking closer, I realized that the journal’s name was very close to the name of a highly-respected journal. Anyone who did not read carefully might think s/he was submitting work to the other publication. Being included on an “important” board that simply wanted my name without any role whatsoever now sounded like both a shame and a sham.

A few days later I attended the 2014 meeting of the International Academy of Nursing Editors (INANE), in which a major topic was “predatory publishing.” The solicitations I had received were perfect examples.

Open Access Journals and Predatory Publishing

Over the past decade, open access publishing has grown substantially. Open access publishing involves a business model of publication in which the cost of publication is paid at the point of origin, i.e., by the author and/or the author’s institution. This differs from the traditional model, for example, in journal publication where authors themselves are not charged fees, although they may not be paid for their submissions.

The original intent of open access publishing is pure: scholars share their work freely and openly with everyone else in the world through online published resources that anyone can access without the restriction of a paid subscription. Many fine articles and other resources have become accessible through this kind of “publication

without borders.” Through open access publishing, anyone with internet access anywhere in the world can retrieve information, read research and perhaps submit scholarly articles that can be readily accessed across disciplines. Open access thus can provide opportunities for learning what is newest and next in health care and other areas. Multi-university initiatives, like the Public Knowledge Project, have developed free “open source software” and conduct research “to improve the quality and reach of scholarly publishing” (pkp.sfu.ca).

Indeed, open access journals fill an important need. While nursing faculty or nurses in academic health systems may have access to world literature as an employment benefit, many other nurses cannot access nursing and other literature. Although print and online journals may be part of membership in associations like the Pennsylvania State Nurses Association (PSNA) or the Association for Women’s Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nursing (AWHONN), people need to be members to access the journals. Memberships can range upward of \$100. Individual subscriptions to nursing journals can range anywhere from a modest \$35 per year to more than \$100, depending upon the journal. Faculty and nurses in academic health systems need not be stressed about reviewing or retrieving literature. However, their institutions are bearing the costs.

According to Barbara Quintiliano, team leader of nursing and life sciences at Falvey Memorial Library of Villanova University, institutional subscrip-

- 1. Deception exists.** Know to whom you are sending your work. Reputable open access publishers produce scholarly work that brings international communities together. However, deceptive, open access publishing has also become a business that preys on unsuspecting authors. (Figure 1)
- 2. Phishing.** Beware of unsolicited e-mails that flatter and make lofty promises.
- 3. Article processing charges (APC):** While you may choose to publish with a source that charges fees, be sure you know what they are and whether you qualify for support from your employer or a grant.
- 4. Protect your name.** Listing publications in predatory sources may affect your future credibility (INANE Predatory Publishing Collaborative, 2014). Among other issues, your name may be used to entice others to submit their work without your knowledge or consent. Board membership on a real board means active involvement.
- 5. Read titles carefully.** Predatory publishers craft titles to sound like or mimic well-respected journals.
- 6. Choose evidence critically.** Be careful of references you select as part of literature reviews, bases for practice and evidence-based activities. Are they from reputable sources?
- 7. Consider the source.** Consider the source if you are evaluating an individual’s credentials for special roles, responsibilities or recognition.

Resources for Awareness about Reputable Journals and Predatory Journals

Beall's List of Predatory Publishers

<http://scholarlyoa.com/2014/01/02/list-of-predatory-publishers-2014/>

Beall, J. (2014). Scholarly Open Access: Critical analysis of scholarly open access publishing Retrieved November 28, 2014 from <http://scholarlyoa.com/about/>

While at times controversial, Beall raises issues that authors and also committees evaluating credentials and publications of applicants should consider.

Butler, D. (2013, March). Investigating journals: The dark side of publishing. *International Weekly Journal of Science*, 495:7442 Retrieved December 1, 2014 from <http://www.nature.com/news/investigating-journals-the-dark-side-of-publishing-1.12666>

Directory of Open Access Journals

<http://doaj.org/>

This directory is using stricter criteria for inclusion of journals.

International Academy of Nursing Editors (INANE's) Collaborative on Predatory Publication Practices (2014).

Authored by the INANE Collaborative, formed from participants at the 2014 33rd Annual Meeting of the International Academy of Nursing Editors (Portland, ME), this online publication includes issues related to open access and predatory publishing, a table with guidelines for evaluating the integrity of a journal and a list of resources for identifying high risk publishers and publications.

Nurse Author & Editor and INANE. Directory of Nursing Journals. Includes listing of journals that have been vetted according to a rigorous review process.

<http://nursingeditors.com/journals-directory/>

Also housed on the INANE website:

<http://nursingeditors.com/2014/07/04/directory-of-nursing-journals-moved-updated-and-improved/>

tions to nursing journals range from \$100 to more than \$3000 per year, and a lot of literature needs to be accessible. Journal subscriptions of even a mid-sized university library can easily total upwards of \$1,000,000 per year.

Traditional subscription model journal publishers usually raise their rates year after year. Thus, a higher percentage of an academic library's budget goes each year to pay for increasingly expensive journals and leaves fewer funds

available to purchase e-books and other scholarly resources. The constantly rising cost of journals has prompted exploring open access options.

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anywhere seems miraculous. However, nothing is truly free. Publication is a business that sells information, for example, in print or online journals or books. Funding to make publication possible comes in various ways: paid subscriptions, as a benefit that comes with paid membership, sponsorship of ads that absorb publication costs and, in the case of open-access publications, by charging the authors or the institutions that employ them. Several models of open access publishing exist and much has been written about the benefits and drawbacks of each. With the “gold model” of open access publishing, article processing charges (APC), also known as publication fees, are paid up-front to cover the review and publication process in order

to make free access possible to readers everywhere (Suber, 2013). Fees may be paid by authors, as part of grants supporting their work, or by institutions that employ them.

Traditionally, the best known peer-reviewed nursing publications have not been open access publications that charge fees to authors, so APCs can be a surprise. Although nurses may use open access sources, many are unaware of the way they are financed and the potential impact upon them as authors.

As open access publishing has mushroomed, a dark side has emerged. According to Beall (2012), a staunch advocate for awareness and ethics in publishing, “Predatory publishers (those who employ the gold open access

model for their own profit) use deception to appear legitimate, entrapping researchers into submitting their work and then charging them to publish it.” Unsuspecting authors can be charged fees of thousands of dollars. The more authors are accepted and pay fees, the more money is made, so volume of authors becomes a priority. With the wide open internet, little scholarship and large claims of grandeur, predatory publications can build thriving businesses by luring nurses as well as authors from many other disciplines.

Red Flag: Stop and Think

The lavish invitations I received raised a “red flag” to “stop and think.” As former editor of *Pennsylvania Nurse*, a true peer-

reviewed journal, I knew that articles go to an expert panel of nurses for review. With a peer-review process, publication is not guaranteed. Some articles are accepted, some require revisions before acceptance and some are rejected. Journals that have large numbers of submissions have a lower acceptance rate. The journal's financial survival does not depend upon the fees that authors would provide. The shortest "turn around" time for a genuinely peer-reviewed article exceeds the week that the e-mail had promised. In the communications I received, the existence and actual cost of the APC were hidden.

Conclusion

Readers of *Pennsylvania Nurse* are diverse and talented. They have much to share through publications accessed by the professional community within and beyond Pennsylvania. Open

access journals have provided a feast of information related to education, practice, administration and research. However, they have also attracted predatory publishers who can lure unsuspecting aspiring authors. As long as predatory publishers continue to exist and to grow, awareness and advocacy are needed to prevent becoming part of their next meal.

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Dr. Toussie Weingarten, PhD, RN, ANEF, has served as editor-in-chief and editorial board member of *Pennsylvania Nurse* and is currently a reviewer for *Pennsylvania Nurse* and *Nursing Economics*. She previously was a member and chair of PSNA's Cabinet on Nursing Practice, Economics & Professional Development. She is a member of the International Academy of Nursing Editors (INANE) and thanks INANE for raising awareness about predatory publishing.