



Predatory Publisher Statement

LESLIE H. NICOLL, PhD, MBA, RN, FAAN
Editor-in-Chief
CIN: Computers, Informatics, Nursing

As editor-in-chief of *CIN: Computers, Informatics, Nursing*, I join my colleagues in the International Academy of Nursing Editors in providing our readers with information about predatory publishers, which engage in unethical and unscholarly practices. I urge all nurses engaged in informatics, and other healthcare providers, especially those who are authors, to become familiar with how to distinguish predatory publishers from publications that adhere to rigorous international standards for peer-reviewed scientific journals. The following position paper, written after the International Academy of Nursing Editors Annual Meeting, held in Portland, ME, in August 2014, provides essential information that is relevant to *CIN* readers and authors.

—Leslie H. Nicoll, PhD, MBA, RN, FAAN

PREDATORY PUBLISHING

INANE “Predatory Publishing Practices” Collaborative¹

As an unintended outcome of the effort to expand open access to scholarly material, the publishing world now has to contend with new challenges around what academic librarian and blogger Jeffrey Beall (in his blog *Scholarly Open Access*, available at <http://scholarlyoa.com/>) has termed “predatory publishers.” In August 2014, participants at the 33rd Annual Meeting of the International Academy of Nursing Editors (INANE) in Portland, Maine, concerned with the potential for inadvertent submissions to these journals

¹INANE “Predatory Publishing Practices” Collaborative:
Sally Thorne, *Nursing Inquiry*
Peggy L. Chinn, *Advances in Nursing Science*
Leslie H. Nicoll, *CIN: Computers, Informatics, Nursing; Nurse Author & Editor*
Rita Pickler, *Journal of Advanced Nursing*
Patricia D’Antonio, *Nursing History Review*
Cynthia Connolly, *Nursing History Review*
Cindy Peternej-Taylor, *Journal of Forensic Nursing*
Dawn Welliver, *Anesthesia eJournal*
Joy Don Baker, *AORN Journal*
Annette Flanagan, *JAMA and The JAMA Network*
Lucy Bradley-Springer, *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care*

as well as the citation of questionable manuscripts in legitimate publications, agreed that it was time to raise awareness and educate our constituent communities about the potential detrimental effects of this emerging phenomenon.

CONDITIONS CREATED BY OPEN ACCESS

Open access publishing is a relatively recent occurrence with the worthy goal of removing restrictions to the online access of peer-reviewed scholarly research. Although it may have created the conditions under which these new predatory publishing practices are flourishing, open access is not, in itself, the problem. Many highly rigorous, scholarly, and professional journals are exclusively open access; other journals offer authors a range of traditional and open access options. These include options for authors or their funders to pay article processing charges for immediate open access and various levels of delayed public access for specific types of articles. As it has taken hold, the open access movement has significantly altered the conventional financial model of many journals. While journal owners historically relied entirely on journal subscriptions and content licenses or advertisements as their revenue base, most open access publishing options are fee-based. Many research granting bodies have strongly advocated for unrestricted access to the findings from studies they fund, and some have willingly funded open access publication costs as a means to make results widely and rapidly available. As a result, publishing has been influenced by for-profit enterprise in ways previously unimagined by scholars. The window of commercial opportunity has been flung wide open, and in many cases thrown completely off its hinges.

Beyond the open access options currently being adopted by mainstream publishers, the ease of digital publishing and exploitation of this new publishing business model has led to myriad new journals, each actively competing for authors and revenue. Some of these new journals, including those introduced by conventional commercial and professional

society publishers to augment their journal portfolios, apply the same rigorous peer review practices and standards of scholarly excellence we have come to rely on as consistent with advances in professional disciplines such as nursing. However, across every academic field, professional discipline, and geographic jurisdiction, we are also seeing the emergence of a new species of publisher whose practices reveal little evidence of editorial and publishing quality. Instead, with profit as the driving force, these “predatory” publishers engage in a range of disturbingly unethical and unscholarly practices.

PREDATORY MOTIVATIONS AND PRACTICES

Typical practices of predatory publishers include promises of rapid review and acceptance for publication, minimal to non-existent review processes, a fabricated editorial board, and mimicry of legitimate journal titles. These publishers often send out flattering individualized email solicitations to potential authors inviting them to submit manuscripts or serve as “guest editors” for their journals. Guest editing typically involves having “editors” invite their own collaborators and colleagues to submit papers for a special issue—for a fee. There are examples of eminent names being listed as an “honorary editor” or members of the “editorial board,” where these scholars were unaware of the existence of the journal or the use of their name in that manner.

Conversely, the named “journal editor” may be someone with no qualifications or credibility in the field, and may simultaneously administer a suite of journals in a wide range of fields in an effort to attract as many submissions from author-customers as possible. In the rush to provide rapid review and acceptance for publication, these editors may review submissions single-handedly, or rely on a single employee “peer” to bless the manuscript and deem it publishable. The result is a “review process” unfettered by actual expert critique. This practice is sometimes evident in the eventual published document, with the date of submission, review and acceptance all occurring in proximity.

Many predatory publishers also deploy unscrupulous marketing practices to seduce unsuspecting potential authors, such as inventing journal titles that are similar to those of well-known and reputable journals, or using logos deceptively like those of conventional publishing houses. Operating within the global environment, these journals tend to establish administrative home bases that afford protection from legal repercussions that could arise from such practices as copyright violation. The goal of such creative strategies is always the appearance of authenticity, thereby luring unwary authors to presume credibility.

When the driving motivation of a journal is profit, the focus is fixed on pleasing the author as the primary source

of revenue. Predatory publishers therefore target senior scholars to build the journal’s credibility and to help attract unsuspecting or naive authors, who may fall prey to easy flattery. Other targets include those whose academic pressures to publish may blind them to the nefarious nature of what allows a journal to bring a manuscript to print in record time. Unfortunately, aspiring authors caught up in the promise of rapid publication may unwittingly find that (1) their career progress is tainted by the lack of credibility of their selected publishing venues, (2) they are liable for unexpected additional fees once their papers have been published, or (3) their previously published papers suddenly cease to exist, or reside in legal limbo, with the copyright signed away to a non-existent publisher and inaccessible through established search mechanisms, because contractual arrangements for these publications may be unenforceable.

We see a significant collective harm for the body of published scholarly nursing literature because concern about quality inherently reduces the profit margin in this predatory model of doing business. Although we have come to trust the practices and processes of our various scholarly and professional publications for the quality and credibility of the corpus of disciplinary knowledge, the new and unmanaged proliferation of pseudo-scholarly activity could significantly flood the market with journals and articles that discredit the profession. In healthcare, this threat is even more serious, as the pseudo-science and poor scholarship published by predatory journals could conceivably result in harm to patients and the health information seeking public.

THE INANE CALL TO ACTION

The INANE community, representing editors of credible and reputable nursing journals, believes that it is imperative to inform nurses of the harm inherent in this new hazard that has arrived in the publishing scene. We encourage nursing authors to use Beall’s list of predatory publishers at Scholarly Open Access (<http://scholarlyoa.com/about/>) as a reliable resource. His approaches and methods, including dynamic monitoring of the publishing world for this purpose and a willingness to reconsider and revise any listing found to be in error or misleading, make Beall’s site extremely helpful for nurses who now need to ensure the credibility of the journals to which they entrust their manuscripts or become otherwise involved. At the same time, Beall would be the first to acknowledge the impossibility of keeping up with all of the emerging new journals. We therefore also encourage potential authors to consult the Directory of Nursing Journals (<http://nursingeditors.com/journals-directory/>), a collaborative effort between INANE and the publication *Nurse Author & Editor*, for journals that have been reviewed and vetted within our community, and to be vigilant for the hallmarks of predatory practices. A third useful resource is Thomas Long’s blog on Nursing Writing

Table 1**Guidelines for Evaluating the Integrity of a Journal**

Question	What to look for	Red flags
Who is the Editor in charge of journal content?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person who has a reputation in the discipline. • Direct contact information for the Editor is provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You cannot find any evidence of the Editor's standing in the discipline. • There is no contact information.
What is the journal's process for assuring quality of content?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear description of the process for review of manuscripts prior to publication is stated. • The names and duties of editorial advisory or review panel members are listed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A promise of rapid review and publication (quality reviews take time). • Mystification of those who are involved in the review process.
Does the journal have sound business and publishing practices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The journal is a member of COPE. • The journal is in the INANE/NA&E Directory of Nursing Journals. • Information about author processing charges (APC), if any, is clear and easily accessible. • If the journal shows an impact factor, it is verifiable in the Journal Citation Reports (Web of Science). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The publisher/journal is on Beall's List at Scholarly OA. • The journal name or other information is suspiciously like another journal. • The journal/publisher solicits manuscripts using excessively complimentary emails.

Sources:

Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA) Code of Conduct (<http://oaspa.org/membership/code-of-conduct/>)

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) Membership (<http://publicationethics.org/members>)

International Association of Scientific, Technical & Medical Publishers (STM) Code of Conduct (<http://www.stm-assoc.org/membership/code-of-conduct/>)

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(<http://nursingwriting.wordpress.com/>), which includes a compilation of recent reports on predatory open-access journals and scholarly conference scams. Another potentially useful resource may be the Directory of Open Access Journals (<http://doaj.org/application/new>), which is working to strengthen its approvals process based on more strict criteria.

We will maintain information on this topic on INANE's Web site (see <http://nursingeditors.com/inane-initiatives/open-access-editorial-standards/editorials-published-open-access-editorial-standards/>) as an ongoing reference for INANE members and professional colleagues. Finally, we offer in the accompanying table a brief compilation of considerations and "red flags" summarized from internationally reputable organizations concerned with publications ethics. These sources too will undoubtedly continue to evolve over time.

In writing this statement, the INANE community hopes to encourage educators, mentors, scholars, and clinical practitioners to join in a campaign to help our colleagues understand emerging hazards on the path to publication. We encourage those who oversee institutional promotion and advancement processes to ensure that (1) their members are well mentored with respect to the publication records they are building, and (2) that their review committees have the knowledge required for fair assessment of work across

the spectrum of publication modalities. Above all, we seek to serve the emerging science, knowledge sharing, and authorial careers of our discipline as well as possible by ensuring that nurses are making wise publishing choices.

INANE members are committed to sustaining the high standards we have come to expect in the published body of nursing knowledge, across the full spectrum of theorizing and philosophizing, science and evidence building, clinical applications, education, leadership, social advocacy and policy engagement, even as we embrace the new possibilities for publishing in the digital universe. Open access is both an exciting opportunity and an intriguingly disruptive force in the publishing world. It is unfortunate that it has been exploited in this predatory manner. However, by translating our best nursing health promotion and disease prevention wisdom to the publishing domain, we can help keep our colleagues and their important ideas safe from harm.

Let's spread the word and disarm the threat together.

The author has disclosed that she has no significant relationships with, or financial interest in, any commercial companies pertaining to this article.

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