

The Perils of Predatory Publishing: Views and Advice from an Editor and a Health Sciences Librarian



EDITOR'S VIEW

In the last ten years scholarly publishing has experienced a significant transformation due in part to increased internet access. In the past, articles were primarily available in print form only, but now there are journals solely published online. With the new open-access model, more articles from all disciplines are now freely available through the Internet and not restricted by subscriptions that limit access (Beall, 2016).

Predatory publishers often exhibit questionable practices with a major incentive to collect fees from authors for publishing their articles (Shen & Bjork, 2015). Those most at risk are newer authors who are not familiar with this practice. A bigger concern is how predatory publishers are affecting the science that underpins our practice and decision-making. We assume that published articles are of high quality and based on good scholarship/scientific methods. Unfortunately this may not always be true. Professionals in all disciplines need to and be aware of predatory publishers and wary of what they are reading.

To gain a better understanding of predatory publishing in nursing, Oermann and colleagues (2016) attempted to identify all known nursing predatory journals and determine their distinguishing characteristics. They discovered there are 140 predatory nursing journals with the greatest increase occurring in the last few years (27 in 2014, 54 in 2015). This trend will likely continue. Plus, many of the predatory journals Oermann, et al. (2016) identified had one to two volumes and then either ceased to exist and/or reduced the number of issues. In addition, they learned that India (12.8%) and the U.S. (12.6%) have the most predatory publishers.

HEALTH SCIENCES LIBRARIAN VIEW

As a health sciences librarian who is actively involved in supporting nursing researchers, keeping current about the landscape of publishing is a must. With the steadily rising costs of scholarly publishing and the impact on

library collections, many librarians are enthusiastic about the future of open access publishing as a model that expands access to information to both clinicians and researchers. Predatory publishing practices, which have existed to some degree even when journals were in print only (inflated page charges), have dramatically increased with progress in technology, serving to complicate the open access movement. As technology becomes more sophisticated so do the webpages of predatory publishers, making it more difficult to distinguish levels of quality. Fortunately there are a multitude of high quality open access publishers contributing to an expansion of freely available evidence and information. Librarians work to promote these high quality publishers and strive to educate scholars about the virtues and the dangers of open access publishing. Sadly, librarians frequently hear from authors who have had negative experiences with predatory publishers and who have given up on open access publishing altogether. It is imperative that scholars do not give away their power by succumbing to this type of generalization. Instead, they should strive to educate themselves and collaborate to ensure that they have the necessary information to make wise choices.

Many become frustrated by the tactics used by predatory publishers and would like to think there may be a rapid demise of them, which is unlikely. With the recent removal of academic librarian Jeffrey Beall's online service which made available educational materials and notes on suspected predatory publishers, it is more difficult to easily identify those publishers. Scholars must be aware and conduct a thorough due diligence when considering any journal for a submission.

TIPS FOR EVALUATING JOURNAL QUALITY:

- Remember that not all low quality journals are open access journals. Although some publishers may not necessarily profit by exploiting your work, they still may not be worth your time.

- ✓ Ask a librarian to investigate and provide details or metrics when available such as impact factors or cite scores.
- ✓ Look up the journal in Ulrich's serial directory (if licensed by your institution). In Ulrich's, find information about the content, publishing frequency, and indexing status.
- ✓ View the journal's web page details to find out about its editorial board and reviewing process. Read sample articles to assess quality. Also, look for known scholars, clinical researchers, and expert clinicians who have published in the journal. Determine the journal's reported acceptance rate.
- ✓ Verify the accuracy of claims made on the journal page, such as impact factor or indexing status, by looking up the journal directly in these sources.
- ✓ Visit the International Academy of Nursing Editors (INANE) website that has vetted a database of 244 nursing journals.

3-4 weeks to several months for completing the review process.

- Journal web page has errors and is poorly written.
- Journal web page content is sparse and does not provide clear information about the peer review process.
- Publisher is not listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals, the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association, or the Committee on Publication Ethics.
- Publisher lists many journals with the same editor, or lists the same editorial board for more than one journal.
- Publisher lists massive number of journals, and content is sparse or irregularly published.
- Journal web page claims to be "indexed in PubMed," but is actually only in PubMed Central (PMC) and does not appear indexed for MEDLINE in NLM catalog.
- Journal web page claims an impact factor, but it is not listed in Journal Citation Reports.

SIGNS OF A PREDATORY PUBLISHER:

- Peer review turnaround time of only two weeks or less. In general, refereed journals minimally take

Elaine Miller, PhD, RN, CRRN, FAAN, FAHA

Jennifer DeBerg, MLS

User Services Librarian, Hardin Library for the Health Sciences, University of Iowa Libraries

REFERENCES

Beall, J. (2016). Open access and web publications. In M. H. Oermann, & J. C. Hays (Eds.), *Writing for Publication in nursing*, (3rd ed.) (pp. 379-393) New York, NY: Springer.

Oermann, M. H., Conklin, J. L., Nicoll, L. H., Chinn, P. L., Ashton, K. S., Edie, A. H., Amarasekara, S., & Budinger, S. C. (2016). Study of predatory open access nursing journals. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 48(6), 624-632.

Shen, C., & Bjork, B. C. (2015). "Predatory" open access: A longitudinal study of article volumes and market characteristics. *BMC Medicine*, 13(230), 1-15.

© 2017 by the American Society for Pain Management Nursing
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmn.2017.10.003>

RESOURCES FOR APPRAISING JOURNALS:

Think. Check. Submit. A campaign comprised of publishers and publishing ethics groups about assessing the quality of a journal or publisher: <http://thinkchecksubmit.org/>

Directory of Open Access Journals <https://doaj.org/>

International Academy of Nursing Editors Journals Directory: <https://nursingeditors.com/journals-directory/>

OA Scholarly Publishers Association <http://oaspa.org/membership/members/>

Committee on Publication Ethics <http://publicationethics.org/>

MEDLINE, PubMed, & PMC: How are they different? http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/factsheets/dif_med_pub.html

List of MEDLINE Journals <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/nlmcatalog/journals>

Journal Citation Reports (Impact Factors)