Predatory journals
Shedding light on the deceptive publishing industry

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Structure

1. What is predatory publishing?
2. Why should we avoid predatory journals?
3. How can we avoid predatory journals?
What is predatory publishing?
What is predatory publishing?

“Predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterized by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices.”

(Grudniewicz et al. 2019)

- Misleading information: fake impact factors, incorrect addresses, misrepresentations of the editorial board
- Deviation from best editorial and publication practices: No retraction policy, requesting a transfer of copyright when publishing OA, no Creative Commons license in an OA journal
- Lack of transparency: No contact information, no information about APCs
- Aggressive, indiscriminate solicitation: repeated invitations to submit research articles, often for unsuitable journals
Some examples..
Dear Dr. Anna Severin,

Good Morning.....!

Can we have your article for successful release of Volume 13 Issue 3 in our Journal?

In fact, we are in need of one article to accomplish the Issue prior 31st January; we hope that the single manuscript should be yours. If this is a short notice please do send 2 page opinion/mini review/case report. we hope 2 page article isn't time taken for eminent people like you.

Your trust in my efforts is the highest form of our motivation, I believe in you that you are eminent manuscript brings out the best citation to our Journal.

Anticipate for your promising response.

Sincerely,

Brianna Gilbert
Journal of Gynecology and Women’s Health (ISSN: 2474-7602)
Empirical Evidence

Market Characteristics and Global Distribution

• Rise in the extent of predatory publishing since the early 2010s. Today, there are about 8000 predatory journals that publish approx. 400,000 articles p.a.

• The regional distribution of publishers is heavily skewed towards India, Asia and Africa with these locations contributing more than 50% of publishers.

• APCs per article are much lower and waiting time for publication is much shorter than for subscription and reputable OA journals (Shen & Björk, 2014).

Scholarly Impact

• Citations to the articles in predatory journals are relatively low.

• Characteristics of citing authors: Inexperienced, little renowned, affiliated with institutions located in Africa, Southeast Asia or South Asia (Frandsen, 2017).
Empirical Evidence

Author Characteristics

• **Early studies:** Affiliated with institutions concentrated in developing countries (especially India and Nigeria, and more generally in Asia, Africa and the Middle East), little to no experience with few prior publications and citations (Watkinson et al., 2016)

• **More recent studies:** Authors are affiliated with institutions that are located in developed countries (e.g. US, Canada, Europe), predominantly affiliated with less prestigious and well-ranked institutions. Authors of publications in predatory journals are less experienced but might be aware of the journal being predatory (Moher et al., 2017; Seethapathy et al., 2016)

Country Studies

• A limited number of country case studies has investigated the relevance of predatory publishing in a national setting.

• Italy (Bague et al., 2017) & South Africa (Mouton and Valentine 2017).
Empirical Evidence

Reviewer Characteristics

The characteristics of scholars who review for predatory journals resemble those of authors: inexperienced, little productive, located in developing regions (Severin et al. 2020).

Indexing and Archiving

• Predatory journals are increasingly indexed in citation databases, e.g. DOAJ, WoS, PubMed, Scopus (Severin and Low, 2019).

• Interpretation: Are citation databases neglecting due diligence? Are indexed journals operating in a grey zone? Are indexed journals wrongly classified as predatory?

Quality of peer review

Study to investigate quality of peer review in predatory journals and legitimate journals included in Publons, using quantitative text analysis with machine learning
Why should we avoid predatory journals?
No rigorous peer review

• Predatory journals usually do not uphold quality or integrity of peer review: potentially substandard quality control; editors potentially pressured to accept papers

• Publications enter the public domain without rigorous quality control
  → Publications can be of any quality
  → Threat to the credibility of (publicly-funded) research
  → Particularly dangerous in fields where practitioners rely on findings published in scientific journals
Climate Denial Group With Trump Admin Ties Is Funding Sea Level Research in Questionable Journals

By Graham Readfearn • Thursday, January 18, 2018 - 12:51

Read time: 10 mins

Murky world of 'science' journals a new frontier for climate deniers

Graham Readfearn

Deniers have found a platform in emerging publications that publish without rigorous review

*These journals, and hundreds more like them... are part of a ballooning online industry offering to give academics a place to publish their work in return for a fee and minimal, if any, quality control.* Photograph: Alamy

(Readfearn, 2018)
Wie seriös sind Studien der Tabak-Industrie?


Cathrin Caprez
Mittwoch, 12.09.2018, 18:04 Uhr

Dieser Artikel wurde 5-mal geteilt.
No indexing and/or archiving

- Predatory journals not guarantee archiving and long-term access to published articles

  → Publications are rarely cited or not at all, have little impact in practice and could eventually be lost

  → Waste of resources used to generate publications
Forschung schafft Wissen.
Reputational damage
Czech university urged to bar new dean over ‘junk journal’ papers

Scholars claim dean-elect is unfit for office after publishing articles in journals found on Jeffrey Beall’s blacklist.

December 31, 2017

By Zach Grove

Twitter: @zach_grove

The Czech Republic’s most famous university is facing calls to block the appointment of its new dean of social sciences after it emerged that she has published in alleged junk journals.

The controversy follows the decision by the academic senate of Charles University in Prague, which was founded in 1348, to select Alice Němcová Teljáková as head of its Faculty of Social Sciences.

More than 230 academics from across the world have added their names to an open letter calling on the university’s rector, Tomáš Zima, to veto the committee’s decision over several questionable publications.

(Grove, 2017)
How can we avoid predatory journals?
How can we avoid predatory journals?

Blacklists and Whitelists

- Databases that endorse the validity of a journal, or the lack thereof, based on sets of certain inclusion criteria
- Inclusion criteria relate to peer review, editorial services, business and publishing practices
- Two approaches: Blacklists and whitelists
How can we avoid predatory journals?

Problems associated with blacklists and whitelists

- **Lack of transparency**: Who decides which journals and publishers are indexed? Which inclusion criteria are met?

- **Incomplete**: One list can never capture all operating journals and publishers.

- **Static**: Publishing practices can change over time. Lists cannot capture this adequately.

- **Black and white**: Many journals operate in a grey-zone somewhere between «predatory» and «legitimate». 
How can we avoid predatory journals?

Other initiatives:

Retraction Watch
Blog that reports on retractions of scientific papers and on related topics, e.g. scientific misconduct and predatory publishing

Think, Check, Submit
Provides a simple checklist for assessing the credentials of a journal or publisher

Examples:
- Do you or your colleagues know the journal?
- Can you easily identify and contact the publisher?
- Are articles indexed in services that you use?
- Do you recognise the editorial board?
Questions?