

# Dealing with Predatory Journals – how to identify, how to avoid, how to support research integrity

24<sup>th</sup> March 2021

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# Disclosures of interest

- I'll be discussing several articles my group has published
- I sit on several journal editorial boards/advisory boards
- Member of the Cochrane Collaboration's oversight committee
- Associate Director, International Congress on Peer Review and Scientific Publication
- I'm super dyslexic



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# Learning objectives



Be able to define a predatory journal



Identify the drivers of the current academic incentives and reward structure



Know how to avoid submission to predatory journals



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ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID PARKINS

## Predatory journals: no definition, no defence

Agnes Grudniewicz, David Moher, Kelly D. Cobey and 32 co-authors

Leading scholars and publishers from ten countries have agreed a definition of predatory publishing that can protect scholarship. It took 12 hours of discussion, 18 questions and 3 rounds to reach.

**W**hen 'Jane' turned to alternative medicine, she had already exhausted radiotherapy, chemotherapy and other standard treatments for breast cancer. Her alternative-medicine practitioner shared an article about a therapy involving vitamin infusions. To her and her practitioner, it seemed to be authentic grounds for hope. But when Jane showed the article to her son-in-law (one of the authors of this Comment), he realized it came from a predatory journal – meaning its

promise was doubtful and its validity unlikely to have been vetted.

Predatory journals are a global threat. They accept articles for publication – along with authors' fees – without performing promised quality checks for issues such as plagiarism or ethical approval. Naive readers are not the only victims. Many researchers have been duped into submitting to predatory journals, in which their work can be overlooked. One study that focused on 46,000 researchers based in Italy found that about 5% of them published in such outlets<sup>1</sup>. A separate analysis suggests predatory publishers collect millions of dollars in publication fees that are ultimately paid out by funders such as the US National Institutes of Health (NIH)<sup>2</sup>.

One barrier to combating predatory publishing is, in our view, the lack of an agreed definition. By analogy, consider the historical criteria for deciding whether an abnormal bulge in the aorta, the largest artery in the body, could be deemed an aneurysm – a dangerous



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# Consensus definition

- “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”



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# Unpack the definition

- False or misleading information
- Deviation from best editorial and publication practices
- Lack of transparency
- **Aggressive, indiscriminate solicitation**



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## One year of unsolicited e-mails: the modus operandi of predatory journals and publishers

Fernanda Santos de Oliveira Sousa <sup>a</sup>, Paulo Nadanovsky <sup>b, c</sup>, Izabel Monteiro Dhyppolito <sup>b</sup>, Ana Paula Pires dos Santos <sup>a</sup>

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdent.2021.103618>

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### Abstract

#### Objectives

To quantify, characterize and analyze e-mail from predatory journals (PJ) received by an academic in dentistry.



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# Left out

- Peer review
- journal quality
- Intent to deceive



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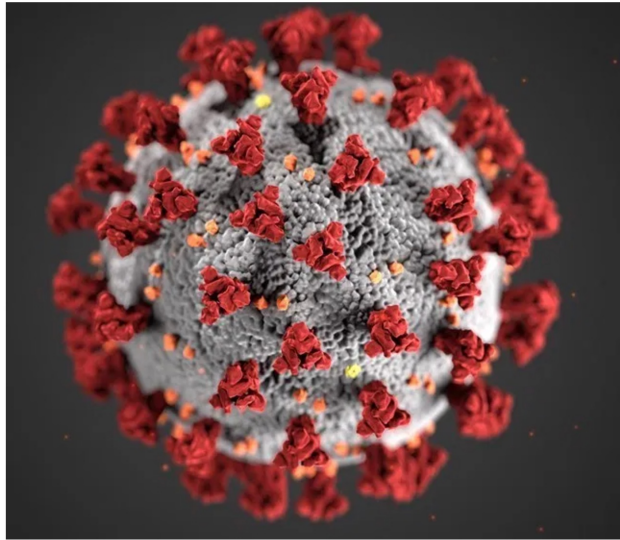
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## Retracted coronavirus (COVID-19) papers



via CDC

We've been tracking retractions of papers about COVID-19 as part of our [database](#). Here's a running list, which will be updated as needed. (For some context on these figures, see [this post](#), our [letter in \*Accountability in Research\*](#) and the last section of this [Nature news article](#). Also see a note about the terminology regarding preprint servers at the end.)



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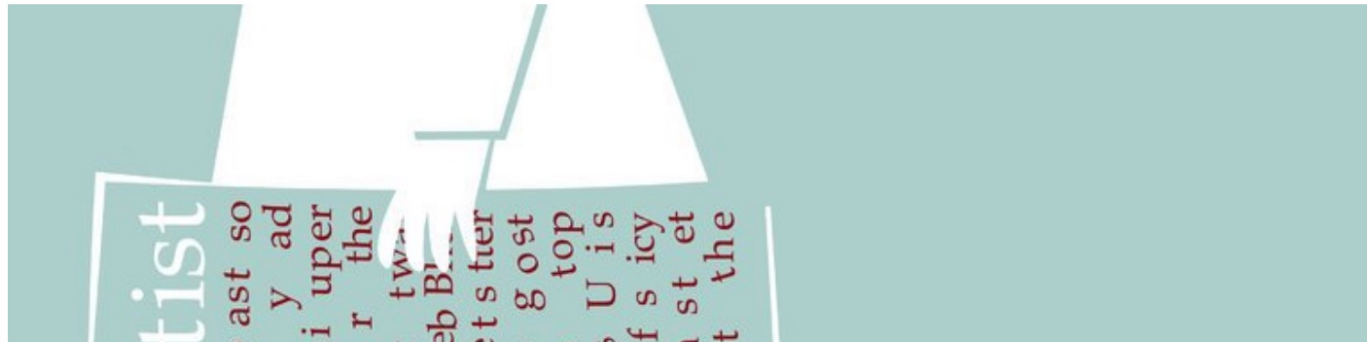
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# Lots of people are publishing in predatory journals

SCIENCE

## *Many Academics Are Eager to Publish in Worthless Journals*

By GINA KOLATA OCT. 30, 2017



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**NEWS**

# Poor-quality, predatory conferences prey on academics

“When we noticed that people were using university or grant money for these conferences, we had to put a stop to it,” said one department chair.

By ALEX GILLIS | MAR 05 2018

 **One comment** | **Share**    

Many publishers of deceptive or poor-quality academic journals have created a big sideline business organizing equally questionable academic conferences. Yet some professors don't seem to be getting the message to stay away.



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# McMaster University: editorial roles

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### Subject wise Global Events

- Pharmaceutical Sciences
- Pharma Marketing & Industry
- Agri, Food & Aqua
- Nutrition
- Physics & Materials Science
- Environmental Science
- EEE & Engineering
- Veterinary
- Chemical Engineering
- Business Management
- Massmedia
- Geology & Earth science
- Microbiology
- Diabetes & Endocrinology
- Nursing
- Healthcare Management
- Neuroscience
- Immunology
- Gastroenterology

### McMaster University, Canada

#### Editors, Contributors and Speakers [ 31 ]

The following is the list of scholars from **McMaster University, Canada** who contributed and/or serves as editors for one or more OMICS International journals and conferences

> Aimee J Nelson	> Alison Ross	> Aliya Khan
> Bernardo L Trigatti	> Dalim Paul	> Faiez Alani
> Haim Einat	> Igor Zhitomirsky	> Jeffrey G Dickhout
> Jordan Milne	> Juliet M Daniel	> Kimberly Braz Gomes
> Lingwen Zeng	> M. Constantine Samaan	> Magda Stroinska
> Moin Khan	> Naveed Durrani: Poster 2	> Nigar Sekercioglu
> Prasanta Kumar Hota	> Prof Islam Khan	> Regina El Dib
> Ricardo Marques e Silva	> Richard C. Austin	> Ronish Gupta
> Ruth Chen	> Samir Ziada	> Shiva Kumar
> Shuen-Kuei Liao	> Vian Mohialdin	> Yaron Shargall
> Yavor Shopov		



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# Beall's lists

J. SANCHEZ



## Predatory publishers are corrupting open access

*Journals that exploit the author-pays model damage scholarly publishing and promote unethical behaviour by scientists, argues Jeffrey Beall.*



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# What do predatory journals publish?

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## Stop this waste of people, animals and money

Predatory journals have shoddy reporting and include papers from wealthy nations, find **David Moher, Larissa Shamseer, Kelly Cobey** and colleagues.

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# High level overview of results

- Lots of participants and animals included in predatory publications
  - > 2 millions people; > 8000 animals
- All types of research are published in these journals
  - RCTs, quasi-experimental, observational studies, pre-clinical
- Ethics approval reported
  - 40%
- Corresponding authors coming from all over the world
  - 57% from higher-income or upper middle-income countries
- Prestigious institutions are included
  - Harvard, uTexas, Mayo Clinic,
  - Of the articles reporting funding, NIH was the most prevalent
  - Canada was not immune!
- Quality of reporting – disturbingly bad



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# Motivations to publish in predatory journals

- Surveyed 583 corresponding authors
- 82 participated (~ 14% response rate)
- The majority of participants first encountered the journal via an e-mail invitation to submit an article (N= 32, 41.0%), or through searching online to find a journal with relevant scope (N=22, 28.2%)
- 83% (n=65) indicated they had received peer review
  - 80% of the respondents (of 65) indicated the peer review was substantive/helpful

Cobey K, et al. Knowledge and motivations of researchers publishing in presumed predatory journals: a survey. *BMJ Open*. 2019;9(3):e026516.



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# What's driving publications to predatory journals

- Publish or perish mandate at universities
- Open Access publication model



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# Publish or perish

- Publications are the currency of research
- In academic settings faculty careers advance based on the quantity of publications
- University ranking schemes are also based on productivity
  - the quantity of publications
- An increasing number of students require publications to complete their degree
  - PhD by publication



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# Open Access (OA)

- 260% growth in subscription journal prices (over 30 years)
- Desire for equity for all
  - Researchers, clinicians and patients
- BioMed Central (BMC) & Public Library of Science (PLOS) - 2000
  - Service fee/article processing charge (APC) – large scale open access
- flipped the power dynamics
  - From library's to authors



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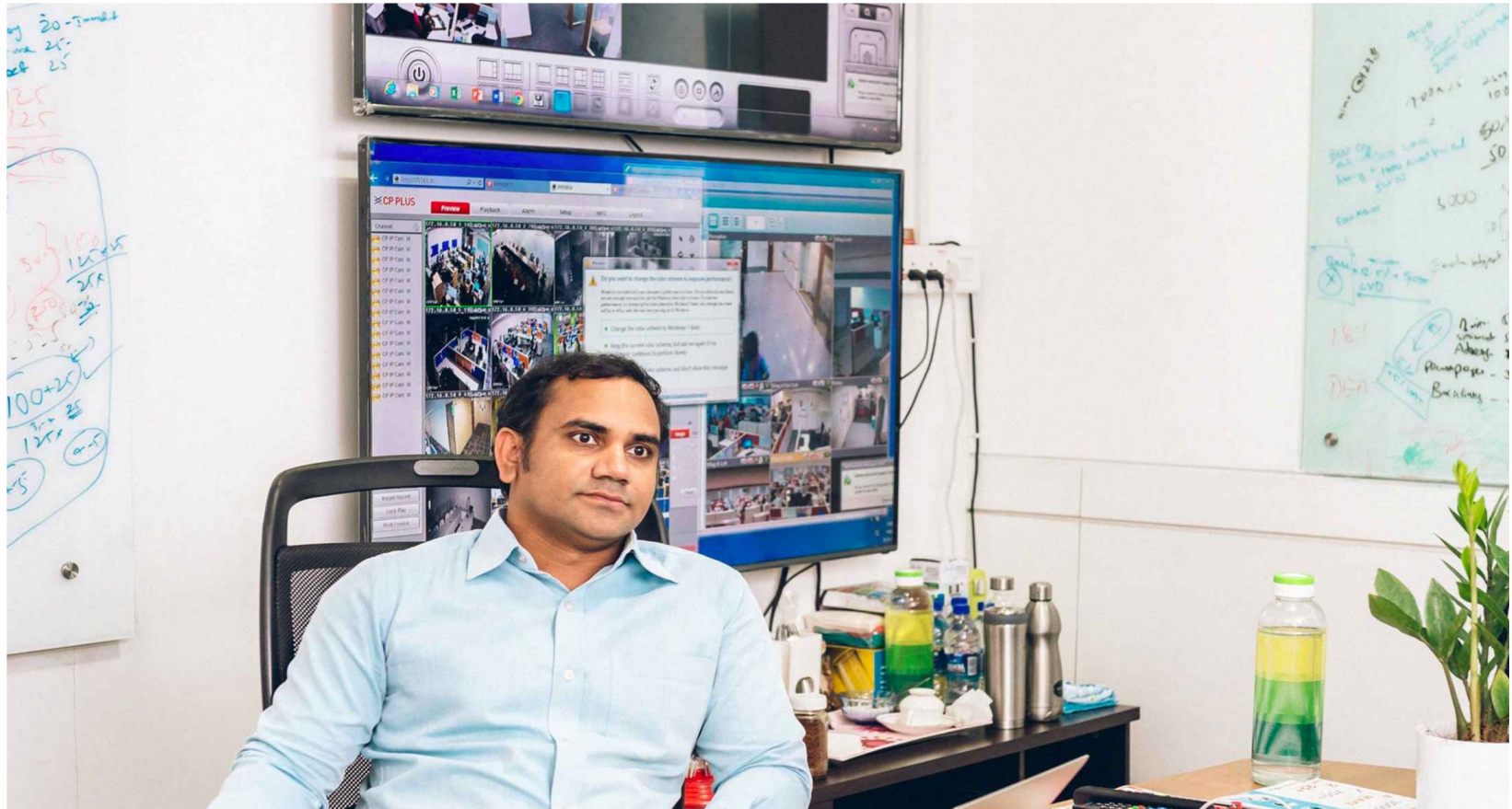
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# OMICS:Srinubabu Gedela



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# Prevalence

Shen and Björk *BMC Medicine* (2015) 13:230  
DOI 10.1186/s12916-015-0469-2



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Open Access

## 'Predatory' open access: a longitudinal study of article volumes and market characteristics



Cenyu Shen\* and Bo-Christer Björk

### Abstract

**Background:** A negative consequence of the rapid growth of scholarly open access publishing funded by article processing charges is the emergence of publishers and journals with highly questionable marketing and peer review practices. These so-called predatory publishers are causing unfounded negative publicity for open access publishing in general. Reports about this branch of e-business have so far mainly concentrated on exposing lacking peer review and scandals involving publishers and journals. There is a lack of comprehensive studies about several aspects of this phenomenon, including extent and regional distribution.



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<sup>3</sup> Centre for Journalismology, Clinical Epidemiology Program, Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, Canada

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dmoher@ohri.ca

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2020;371:m4265  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m4265>  
Published: 08 December 2020

## Predatory journals enter biomedical databases through public funding

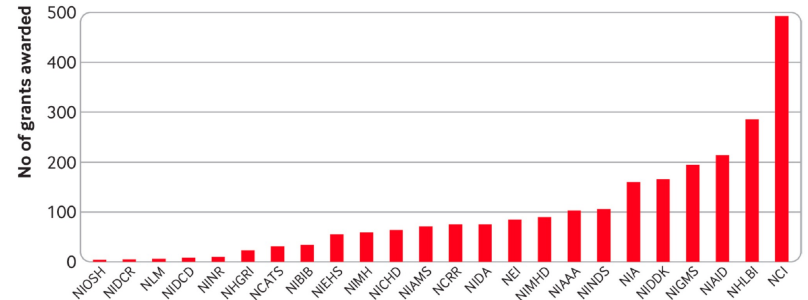
Providing guidance to publicly funded authors on how to publish their work in open access journals is likely to reduce the waste of public money, say **David Moher and colleagues**

Andrea Manca,<sup>1</sup> Lucia Cugusi,<sup>1</sup> Andrea Cortegiani,<sup>2</sup> Giulia Ingoglia,<sup>2</sup> David Moher,<sup>3,4</sup> Franca Deriu<sup>1</sup>

In the past decade the scientific community has faced a serious threat to its integrity and credibility with the rise of predatory journals. These journals manipulate and exploit the open access publishing model but omit the quality checks and editorial services that are routinely provided by legitimate journals, such as peer review, plagiarism detection, and verification of ethical approval of experiments. Although the descriptor “predatory” has been criticised for grossly conflating poor quality with misconduct and for simplistically classifying the scholarly publishing environment into bad and good (predatory or not),<sup>1</sup> the term is now widely accepted

susceptible. Predatory journals exist in all scientific disciplines, but the biomedical field is the hardest hit.<sup>6</sup>

The escalating number of online predatory journals introduces a risk for patients’ safety because readers, many of whom are clinicians or patients, might consider applying the information retrieved from these questionable sources into clinical practice.<sup>7</sup> The quality, ethics, and authenticity of research findings cannot be considered to have been vetted because of minimal or absent editorial oversight. The content of the papers might be of acceptable or good







Journal of Clinical Epidemiology 134 (2021) 65–78

Journal of  
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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Meta-epidemiological study of publication integrity, and quality of conduct and reporting of randomized trials included in a systematic review of low back pain

J.A. Hayden<sup>a,\*</sup>, J. Ellis<sup>a</sup>, R. Ogilvie<sup>a</sup>, L. Boulos<sup>b</sup>, S. Stanojevic<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Community Health & Epidemiology, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

<sup>b</sup>Maritime SPOR SUPPORT Unit, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

Received 19 October 2020; Received in revised form 7 January 2021; Accepted 20 January 2021; Available online 2 February 2021

Abstract

**Objective:** To comprehensively describe the quality of conduct, reporting, and publication integrity characteristics for all trials included in a large Cochrane review, comparing those published by presumed predatory publishers with those published by nonpredatory publishers.

**Design:** Cross-sectional meta-epidemiological study.

**Study selection:** Two hundred seventy-nine studies (25,704 participants) eligible for the recent update of the “Exercise therapy for chronic low back pain” Cochrane review were included.

**Data extraction:** Study and manuscript characteristics, including predatory publication status and other quality and integrity characteristics were extracted along with treatment effect.

**Results:** Nine percent of trials included were in presumed predatory publications; 12% in the period since 2010. We found frequency of other concerning characteristics to range from low (eg, plagiarism, 5%) to common (eg, lack of evidence of trial registration or protocol publication [75%]; insufficient sample size [84%]) in included studies. Studies published by presumed predatory publishers consistently had inferior conduct, reporting and publication integrity characteristics. Presumed predatory publication was associated with missing conflict of interest statement (OR 7.6, 95% CI 3.0–19.1), inadequate follow-up duration (OR 11.2, 95% CI 3.7–33.7), incomplete study methods (OR 12.1, 95% CI 2.8–52.2) and baseline reporting (OR 4.3, 95% CI 1.6–11.7), and high risk of bias (OR 2.7, 95% CI 1.2–6.3). All (100%) presumed predatory publications were missing trial registrations (vs. 72%) and had inadequate sample sizes (vs. 82%). Trials published in presumed predatory journals did not appear to have inflated effect sizes.

**Conclusions:** Predatory publishers pose a distinct challenge to the consumption and synthesis of randomized controlled trials. More work is needed in other clinical areas to understand the potential impact of randomized controlled trials published in predatory publications, and as a result, the potential impact on evidence from systematic reviews that include these studies. © 2021 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.



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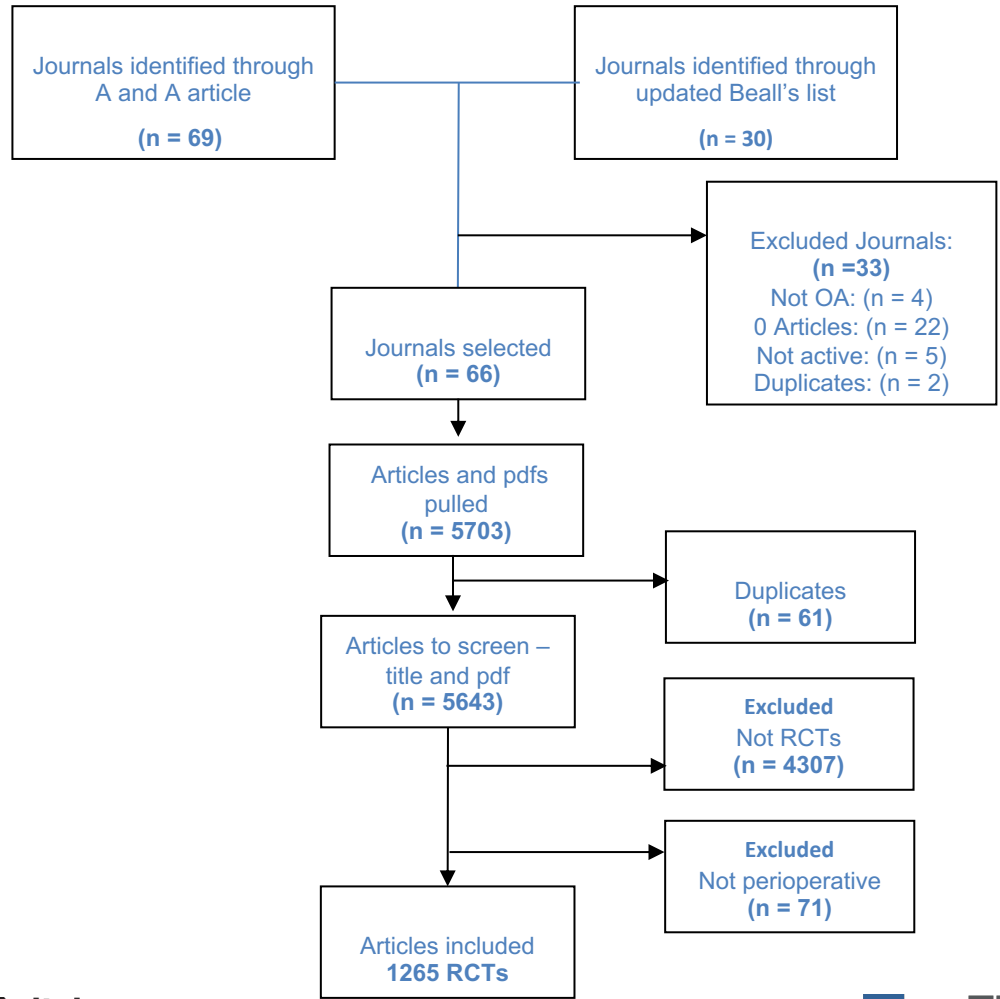
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# Citation Analysis

- Process used to assess the number of times predatory journal articles are cited by other articles
- Four databases:
  1. Google Scholar
  2. Web Of Science
  3. Dimensions
  4. Microsoft Academic



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# Citation Analysis Data Summary

	Google Scholar	Web of Science	Dimensions	Microsoft Academic
Mean	4.4	1.2	2.0	1.9
SD	8.6	2.8	4.5	5.3
Mode	0	0	0	0
Median	1	0	0	0
Max # of Citations	112	30	45	113



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# Other Noteworthy Data

- 962 (~75%) of studies reported a DOI
  - 213 (22%) of these DOIs were later found to be invalid



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# Cochrane reviews

- 25 Cochrane reviews citing 29 RCTs
  - 13 RCTs in a quantitative analysis
  - 2 RCT in a qualitative analysis
  - 2 RCTs “awaiting assessment” and will be included in review update
  - 12 RCTs were excluded
    - Wrong intervention, n=6
    - Wrong comparator group, n=4
    - Wrong outcomes of interest, n=2



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# How stakeholders can respond to the rise of predatory journals

Predatory journals are a global and growing problem contaminating all domains of science. A coordinated response by all stakeholders (researchers, institutions, funders, regulators and patients) will be needed to stop the influence of these illegitimate journals.

Manoj Mathew Lalu, Larissa Shamseer, Kelly D. Cobey and David Moher

- Starve them of submissions



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**Table 1 | Proposed stakeholder actions to prevent completed research from reaching predatory journals**

Stakeholder	Direct consequences of predatory publishing	Actions to prevent predatory publishing	Benefits of publishing in legitimate journals
Researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deceived into publishing in substandard outlets</li> <li>Integrity/credibility of research may be questioned</li> <li>Potentially harmful to reputation and career if detected</li> <li>Little or no dissemination or uptake</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn 'red flags' of predatory journals/publishers<sup>3</sup></li> <li>Engage with and promote the Think, Check, Submit campaign (<a href="http://thinkchecksubmit.org">http://thinkchecksubmit.org</a>)</li> <li>Before submission check whether journal is a member of COPE (<a href="http://publicationethics.org">http://publicationethics.org</a>) and whether the open access journal is listed in the DOAJ (<a href="https://doaj.org">https://doaj.org</a>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Builds/maintains credibility</li> <li>Research is peer reviewed</li> <li>Research can be consistently found for dissemination to target readers/audiences</li> <li>Research can be built on in future research</li> <li>Improves impact and metrics</li> </ul>
Academic institutions and academic libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potentially harmful to institutional reputation/credibility, if detected</li> <li>May unknowingly count predatory publications towards promotion/tenure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure institutional libraries offer researcher education and support on open access</li> <li>Provide mandatory training to graduate students, researchers and information specialists/librarians on best publishing practices, including how to select a journal</li> <li>Develop and enforce policies on expected standards of publishing</li> <li>Value and reward good publishing practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Builds/maintains institutional credibility</li> <li>Facilitates/promotes researcher responsibility for publishing decisions</li> <li>Ensures distribution of rewards (for example, promotion/tenure) based on ethical and transparent publishing practices</li> </ul>



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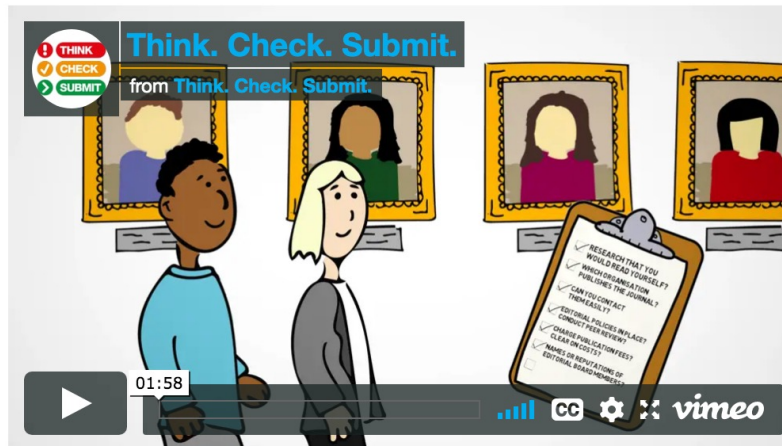
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Choose the right journal or publisher for your research



**Think. Check. Submit.** helps researchers identify trusted journals and publishers for their research. Through a range of tools and practical resources, this international, cross-sector initiative aims to educate researchers, promote integrity, and build trust in credible research and publications.



Sharing research results with the world is key to the progress of your discipline and career but with so many publications, how can you be sure you can trust a particular journal? Follow this checklist to make sure you choose trusted journals and publishers for your research.



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## Tools for selecting a journal

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The decision of where to publish your research is an important one. Where you publish impacts who will read and use your findings. Discussing your study and findings with colleagues who are content experts in your field may be a good first step in the process of selecting a relevant journal. The considerations outlined above (e.g., metrics, open access status, transparency) should also be factored into your decision.

There are a number of freely available journal selector tools that may be useful to get an idea of the types of journals that may be relevant for your work. Examples include:

- [Jane: Journal/Author Name Estimator](#)
- [Elsevier Journal Finder](#)
- [Springer/BMC Journal Finder](#)
- [JournalGuide](#)



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<http://www.ohri.ca/journalology>



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# https://app.lib.uliege.be/compass-to-publish/test

## Compass to Publish (Beta Version)

### Are you suspicious of a journal's authenticity? Is it a **predatory journal**?

These are legitimate questions if you're invited to submit a paper that:

- promises your rapid publication;
- has procedures and/or policies that look suspicious;
- is outside of your area(s) of expertise.



#### Compass to Publish



**helps you determine the degree of authenticity** of open access journals requiring or hiding article processing charges (APCs) using a criteria-based evaluation

aims to **help the scholarly community to better understand** predatory journals and publishers

offers a **transparent methodology and weighing method**

**is not designed** for open access journals **that explicitly state that they do not require** article processing charges (APCs)

**does not evaluate the quality** of a journal, but its **degree of authenticity**

**does not pretend** to offer an **exhaustive list of criteria** for the identification of predatory journals

**does not pretend** to offer a **formal evaluation** in a few clicks, but aims to **involve researchers** in a **critical** and analytical process



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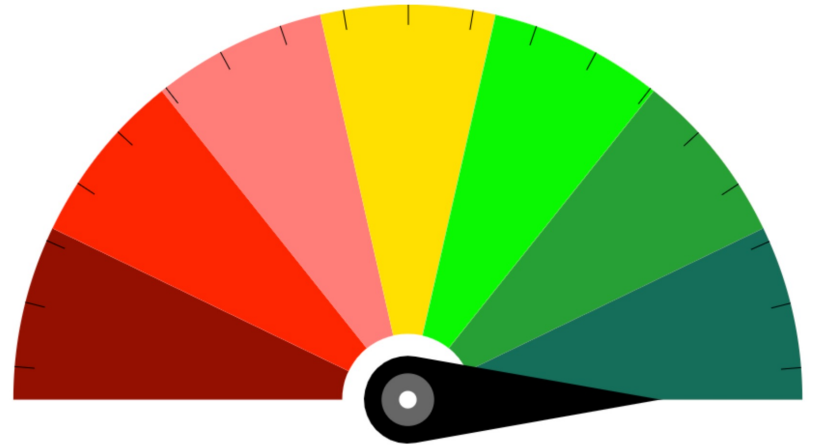
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Results for *PLOS medicine*

You did not answer enough questions for the test to be accurate.

Rest assured! Everything seems to indicate that this journal is very unlikely to be predatory.

Show details



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# Researchers should be asking themselves

- Have I cited work in this journal?
- What do my (senior) colleagues think of this journal?
- Does the journal have consistent content?
- What do my (senior) colleagues think of this conference?
- How many years has the conference been held?
- Have I attended this conference previously?



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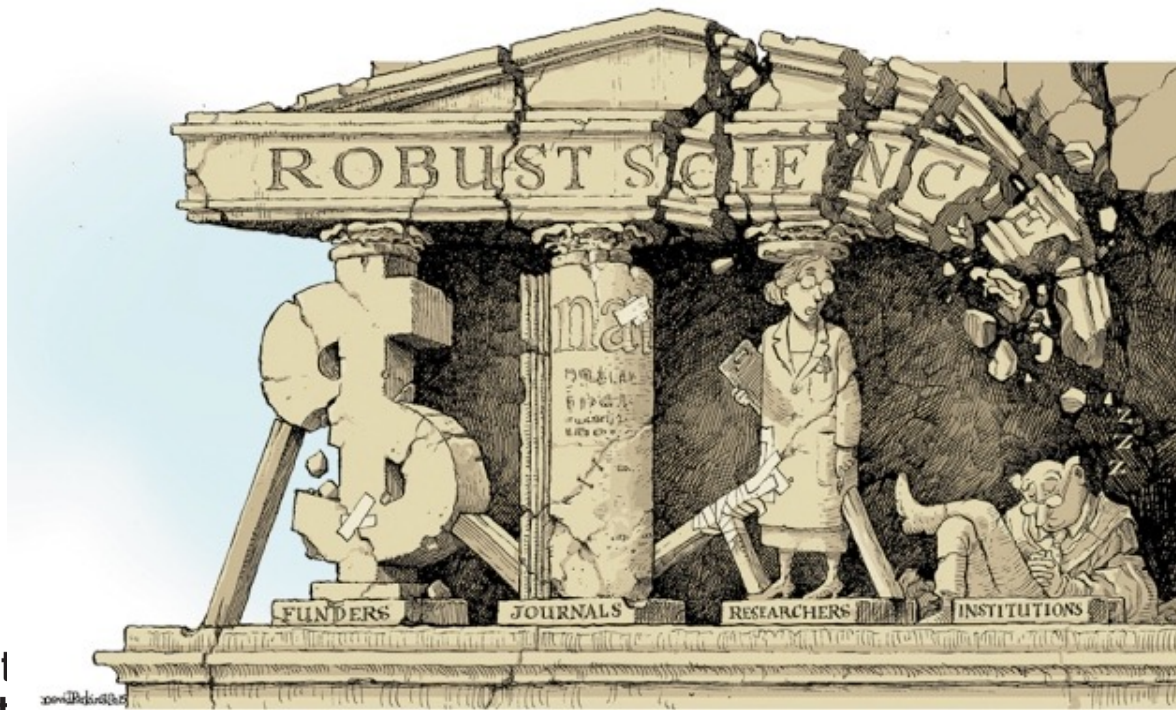
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# Research Institutions

## DIRECT CONSEQUENCES OF PREDATORY PUBLISHING

- Harmful to institutional reputation/credibility, if detected
- May unknowingly count predatory publications towards hiring/promotion/tenure



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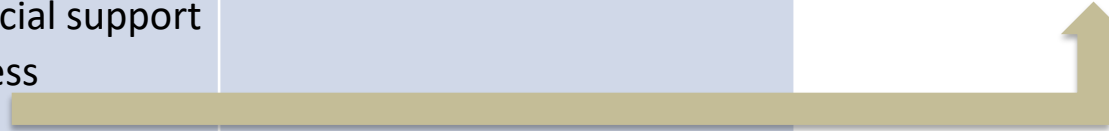
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# Research Institutions

ACTIONS TO PREVENT PREDATORY PUBLISHING	BENEFITS OF PUBLISHING IN LEGITIMATE JOURNALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide mandatory training to graduate students, researchers and information specialists/librarians on best publishing practices, including how to select a journal</li> <li>• Develop and enforce policies on expected standards of publishing</li> <li>• Provide financial support for open access publishing</li> <li>• Value and reward good publishing practice</li> <li>• Audit and feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds/maintains institutional credibility</li> <li>• Facilitate/promote researcher responsibility for publishing decisions</li> <li>• Ensures that distribution of rewards (e.g., promotion/tenure) based on ethical/transparent publishing practices</li> </ul>



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# <https://osf.io/trcy3/>



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## **OTTAWA HOSPITAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE PUBLICATION PRACTICE GUIDELINES**

Recommended by the Senior Management Committee  
September 1, 2017

*These guidelines are largely based on the 'Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals' (accessed Fall 2015) produced by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE). The most recent version of these recommendations is available online at [www.icmje.org](http://www.icmje.org).*



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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

**Top health research funders' guidance on selecting journals for funded research [version 1; peer review: 1 approved]**

Larissa Shamseer <sup>1-4</sup>, Kelly D. Cobey <sup>1,3</sup>, Matthew J. Page <sup>5</sup>,  
 Jamie C. Brehaut<sup>1,4</sup>, Jeremy M. Grimshaw <sup>4,6</sup>, Sharon E. Straus<sup>2</sup>,  
 Lesley A. Stewart <sup>7</sup>, David Moher <sup>1,3</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Monash University, Melbourne, VIC, 3004, Australia

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<sup>7</sup>Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, University of York, UK, York, YO10 5DD, UK

**V1** First published: 11 Feb 2021, **10**:100  
<https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.27745.1>  
 Latest published: 11 Feb 2021, **10**:100  
<https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.27745.1>

Open Peer Review

Reviewer Status

Invited Reviewers

- Few funders provided guidance on how to select a journal in which to publish funded research.
- Funders have a duty to ensure that the research they fund is discoverable by others.
- This research is a benchmark for funder guidance on journal selection prior to Plan S's implementation
  - (a global, funder led initiative to ensure immediate, open access to funded, published research)



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# Welcome to The Centre for Journalology

Journalology is the science of publication practices and the study of these activities. Our group conducts research and gives outreach on a wide range of journalology topics. The Centre for Journalology is based in the [Methods Centre](#) of the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute (OHRI) and operates under the leadership of Dr. David Moher. Our goal is to help enhance the reporting quality of research in order to increase the value of biomedical research.

## Research



### Predatory journals

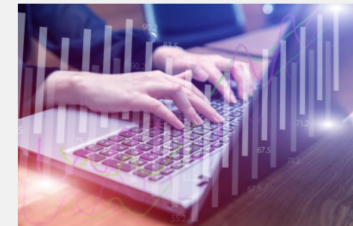
Our team is active studying predatory journals. Predatory journals operate with self-interest in mind. They do not value publication ethics or best practice. Our research on predatory journals looks to: 1) establish a clear definition of what predatory journals are; 2) understand how predatory journals operate; 3) develop solutions (e.g. tools, policy) to stop predatory journals.

[Read more](#)



### Reporting Guidelines

Reporting guidelines are checklists of essential information to report in a manuscript. There are different types of reporting guidelines for different formats of research. Our team works to develop and update reporting guidelines including CONSORT, SPIRIT, PRISMA, PRISMA-P, and STARD. We also evaluate the implementation and uptake of reporting guidelines.



### Research(er) Assessment

Our team is looking at ways we might re-evaluate how we evaluate researchers and research outputs. Examples of ongoing work include an assessment of criteria for tenure and promotion, and work looking to develop, implement, and monitor improved metric systems.

[Read more](#)



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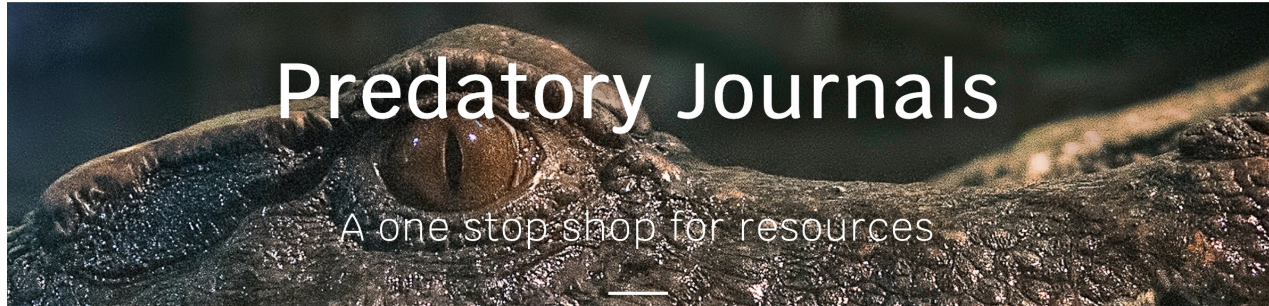
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<http://www.ohri.ca/journalology/>



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Our Centre for Journalology has led the development of a series of resources to educate about predatory journal. Through education and collaboration we hope to reduce the impact of predatory journals on science and society.

## What is a predatory journal?

Working with a team of international stakeholders, we recently established a consensus definition of what a predatory journal is.



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# One stop shop

## Predatory Journals

### Frequently Asked Questions for Clinicians and Researchers



#### What are predatory journals?

Predatory journals and publishers are defined as entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship. They don't uphold the publishing best practices and are characterized by:

- false or misleading information
- deviation from best editorial and publication practices
- a lack of transparency
- the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices.

1



#### How prevalent are predatory journals and publishers?

Shen and Björk (2015) identified approximately 8,000 predatory journals in 2014, and found a **steady increase in the number of predatory journals** between 2010 and 2014. There is no indication that these numbers are decreasing.

It is impossible to know the full scope or the exact number of predatory journals or papers published in predatory journals. These studies are often not indexed, and therefore **cannot be found or tracked**.

2



#### What problems do predatory journals pose?

The lack of a proper peer review process leads to publication of papers with illegitimate findings, no ethical approval, plagiarism and fabrication. Additionally, predatory journals are often not indexed, and therefore cannot be easily located and/or disseminated. This results in a massive waste of time, money, research participants and animals.

3



#### How can I detect a predatory journal?

There is no single defining characteristic of a predatory journal. Some things to look out for include:

1. Poorly written websites (e.g., spelling and grammar mistakes)
2. The journal isn't a member of the DOAJ or COPE
3. The journal's contact information is not stated or not verifiable
4. No peer review process is described, or it is described as suspiciously quick
5. E-mail solicitations to submit to the journal are sent from unknown senders

4



#### What should I do if I've inadvertently published in a predatory publisher?

1. Retract any submissions or publications via email, as there likely won't be a formal way to retract.
2. Send several follow-up emails to the editor, entire editorial board, or any journal contact - this may not be a linear process.
3. Do not list the paper on your CV.
4. Disseminate your paper responsibly (preprint, legitimate journal).

5

## I think I submitted to a predatory journal. What do I do now?



### 01. Do not pay the publication fee

Before you confirm the legitimacy of the journal, **do not pay** any relevant article processing charges. Instead, try to email the journal's Editor to withdraw the accepted submission.

### 02. Do not sign a copyright agreement

If the paper you submitted to a predatory journal gets accepted, **do not** sign a copyright agreement. Instead, try to email the journal's Editor to withdraw the accepted submission.



### 03. Write to the journal to withdraw/ retract the submitted/accepted manuscript

Persistence is key, if you do not get a response, follow-up. If the Editor-in-Chief does not respond, consider copying the e-mails of Editorial Board members in your correspondence. Consider if there is a resource at your institution to support you in your correspondence.

### 04. Resist the journal's request for any withdraw/ retraction fee

Some predatory journals might ask you to pay a withdrawal/ retraction fee to remove your paper. **Do not** pay the fee. Instead, continue persistently to ask them to retract your paper. Maintain professionalism and highlight the lack of ethics in any refusal to withdraw your work



### 05. Publish responsibly in the future

Submit your work to a new legitimate journal; if the predatory journal refused to retract your article, let the Editor of the new journal know about this situation. Prevent this from recurring by learning to identify predatory journals and publishers before submission.

Please direct questions to [Dr. Kelly Cobey](#)



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Open Access

## Checklists to detect potential predatory biomedical journals: a systematic review



Samantha Cukier<sup>1</sup>, Lucas Helal<sup>1</sup>, Danielle B. Rice<sup>1</sup>, Justina Pupkaite<sup>2</sup>, Nadera Ahmadzai<sup>3</sup>, Mitchell Wilson<sup>1</sup>, Becky Skidmore<sup>1</sup>, Manoj M. Lal<sup>4</sup> and David Moher<sup>1\*</sup>

### Abstract

**Background:** The increase in the number of predatory journals puts scholarly communication at risk. In order to guard against publication in predatory journals, authors may use checklists to help detect predatory journals. We believe there are a large number of such checklists yet it is uncertain whether these checklists contain similar content. We conducted a systematic review to identify checklists that help to detect potential predatory journals and examined and compared their content and measurement properties.

- There is a plethora of published checklists that may overwhelm authors looking to efficiently guard against publishing in predatory journals.
- The continued development of such checklists may be confusing and of limited benefit. The similarity in checklists could lead to the creation of one evidence-based tool serving authors from all disciplines.



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# How to detect a potential predatory/deceptive journal



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ohri.ca/journalology

Below is an evidence-based<sup>1,2</sup> list of the most important features of suspected biomedical predatory journals. Some of these items may indicate that a journal is of lower quality, but not predatory. In both cases (potential predatory or lower quality), we recommend that you avoid submission.

## Is the journal potential predatory/deceptive?

**STEP 1:** Consider the following as the most salient indicators of potential predatory journals (major red flags in order of most troubling to less troubling). **Any 1 or more checks here would warrant no submission to the journal.**



- Article processing/publication charge (APC) is very low (e.g., < \$150 USD);
- The journal promotes a fake impact factor on its website, e.g. Index Copernicus Value (ICV);
- The journal is open access but it is not listed in the membership Directory of Open Access Journals (check [here](#));
- The journal is not a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (check [here](#)).

**STEP 2:** Now you are examining the journal to decide between (1) lower quality, or (2) reasonable to submit to. Take a look at the following lists and assessments, ordered from most troubling to less troubling.  
**If you can check off 2 or more criteria, we recommend you avoid submission:**

### Website and Contact Information



- The journal does not have an impact factor on Journal Citations Reports (JCR). Check [here](#) (uOttawa library subscription required);
- Scope of the journal's topics includes non-biomedical topics alongside biomedical topics;
- Website includes spelling and/or grammatical errors;
- Images are distorted/fuzzy;
- Homepage language targets authors, e.g.: inviting submissions or promising rapid publication;
- Contact email address is non-professional and non-journal affiliated, e.g., @gmail.com or @yahoo.com.

### Review Process



- There is no description of the manuscript handling process, e.g. the website asks that you submit your manuscript but does not describe how the manuscript will continue on to peer review or how many reviewers will see your work;
- Manuscripts must be submitted via a personal email rather than through an editorial management system where you would log in with a username and password;

### Article Processing (information often found in the policies section of the journal or publisher website)



- Journals claiming to be open access either retain copyright of published research, or fail to mention copyright or creative commons licenses;
- There is no retraction policy;
- There is no information on whether and how journal content will be digitally preserved.

If you are unsure about the quality of a journal or publisher, talk to a librarian at your institution and take a look at the resources on our website: [ohri.ca/journalology](http://ohri.ca/journalology).

#### Sources:

1. Cobey KD, Lulu MM, Skidmore B, Ahmedzai N, Grudniewicz A, Moher D. What is a predatory journal? A scoping review [version 2; referees: 3 approved]. F1000Research. 2018;7:1001. doi: 10.12688/f1000research.15256.2.
2. Shamsseer L, Moher D, Maduekwe O, Turner L, Barbour V, Burch R, Clark J, Galipeau J, Roberts J, Shea BJ. Potential predatory and legitimate biomedical journals: can you tell the difference? A cross-sectional comparison. BMC medicine. 2017 Dec;15(1):28. doi: 10.1186/s12916-017-0785-9



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# Policy documents

**Policies and Statements Regarding Predatory Journals**

Show 12 entries Search:

Name of document with link	Type of document (policy, guidelines, statement, other)	Name of organization	Type of organization (funder, university, research institution, other)	Date of release (YYYY/MM/DD, unknown)	Language
Discussion document: Predatory Journals	Other	COPE	Other	2019/11/01	English
Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing	Guidelines	OASPA; COPE; DOAJ; WAME	Other	2018/01/15	English
The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity	Guidelines	ALLEA	Other	2017/03/24	English
Pratiquer une recherche intègre et responsable	Guidelines	CNRS Ethics Committee	Funder	2017/03/15	French
Predatory Journals Memo	Statement	The City University of New York	University	2017/11/01	English
Journal of Higher Education Management	Other	American Association of University Administrators	Other	2017/01/01	English
Proposed 2020 Business Accreditation Standards	Statement	AACSB	Other	2020/04/26	English
Resolution Regarding Predatory Journals	Statement	AJCU	Other	Unknown	English
Rank and Tenure Policies, Criteria and Guidelines - John Massey School of Business	Statement	JMSB	University	2017/11/01	English
NRF Statement on Predatory Journals & Deceptive Publishers	Statement	NRF	Funder	2017/03/22	English
Convocatorias Abiertas SNI	Statement	CONACYT	Funder	Unknown	Spanish
Copyright, Open Access and ensuring quality in publications	Statement	MacQuarie University	University	Unknown	English

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# Journal Authenticator Tool

It is becoming increasingly difficult for healthcare workers, researchers, trainees, and patients to discriminate between predatory journals and legitimate journals.

This is a problem if health decisions are based on poor quality research shared in predatory journals or legitimate ones. Other stakeholders, including research institutions and funders are also facing challenges monitoring their researchers and research they fund to ensure it is responsibly disseminated and does not appear in predatory journals.

**We seek to develop a “Digital Journal Authenticator” tool that can help stakeholders detect predatory characteristics of journals.**

We envision this tool would provide information about a given journals' operations and transparency practices.

Stakeholders could then use this information to make a more informed decision about whether they want to interact with the journal (e.g., read it, submit to it, cite work published there). Journals could use the tool to benchmark and set goals to increase the transparency of their operations. The tool will be developed in a way that journal information is collated in an automated manner.

We anticipate using programming and leveraging existing application programming interfaces (APIs) from relevant websites to develop the tool.

Curious about what the tool could look like?



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