

Approaching Predatory Publishing: A guide for early career researchers

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In the fast-paced world of biomedical research, early career researchers (ECRs) face increasing pressure to publish their work in reputable journals. However, amidst the competitive publishing landscape, a dark underbelly exists – predatory publishing. These counterfeit journals prioritize profit over scientific progress and have a detrimental impact on the integrity of research. ECRs, in particular, are vulnerable to falling into the trap of these deceptive journals. In this blog, we present a comprehensive guide to help ECRs recognize and avoid predatory publishing.

Identifying Features of Predatory Publishing

Predatory journals operate in a gray area, making it challenging to distinguish them from legitimate journals. To help ECRs navigate this treacherous terrain, we have summarized common identifying features associated with predatory publishing:

1. Lack of Transparency

Predatory journals often lack transparency in their peer review process and editorial board information. Reputable journals provide clear details about their review procedures and editorial team.

2. Unsolicited Invitations

Beware of unsolicited emails inviting you to submit your research. Predatory journals are known for aggressive spamming practices, while reputable journals rarely resort to such tactics.

3. Fast Publication Process

Predatory journals boast rapid publication times, promising quick acceptance and publication. Legitimate journals adhere to a thorough peer review process, which may take several months.

4. Article Processing Charges (APCs)

While legitimate journals may charge APCs for open-access publishing, predatory journals often exploit this model by charging exorbitant fees. Be cautious of journals demanding payment before peer review or guaranteeing publication upon payment.

Recognizing Deceitful Invitations

A study by [Mercier et al.](#) analyzed deceitful invitations from potential predatory journals and phony conferences sent to authors following their first publication. Some journals targeted authors based on their previous research interests and even offered them positions on the editorial board or as guest editors. ECRs must be vigilant when assessing emails and invitations to differentiate between predatory publishers and legitimate ones.

Journal of [Journal Name]

Dear Professor, "[Author Name]"

Greetings!

I would like to inform you that we have updated our website, Kindly look at [journal website] and make your research represents the highest standards and integrity towards the scientific community.

I am writing this email to introduce our Journal [Journal Name] due for release our upcoming issue in the end of July.

We have just gone through your published manuscript which was quite interesting ["Author's previously published work"] so we would like to publish your valuable manuscript in our Journal too.

A predatory journal introduces by mentioning the author's previously published work to take the reader into confidence.

We believe that your research experience and abundance of knowledge will help us in spreading the scientific knowledge throughout the world, we request you to kindly submit your unpublished manuscript towards our esteemed Journal.

Note: If you are interested in joining our Editorial/Reviewer Board please send your CV and a recent photograph

Invitation to join the editorial board of the journal in the same email.

We look forward to a long-lasting scientific relationship.

Thanks and Regards,

XXXXX

[Journal Name]

XXXX Publishing

Journal of [Journal Name]

Greetings!!

[Names of journals published by the predatory publisher] are an international full-text peer-reviewed open-access scientific journals, providing a platform for advances in

["fields/scope of interest"]

The scope of interests may include topics other than biomedical topics.

Grammatical error

The journal publishes original research, review articles, short communications, commentaries, case reports, case studies, editorials, comparative narratives, policy briefs, education and training articles, and letters to the editor, which cover significant new findings in all areas of Surgery.

Volume / Issue / Month: Volume: 03 / Issue: 11 / August 2022
Submission's deadline: On or Before 30th August 2022.

Often authors are requested to submit articles for a particular issue of the journal.

A submission deadline is mentioned for rapid publication.

Submit Initial article via Online Mode: [EMAIL US](#)

Manuscripts received after the deadline will be considered for the next issue release. All the best with your current research projects.

Looking forward to your submission

Request to submit manuscript via email.

With Regards,
XXXX XXXX
Editorial Coordinator
XXXX Publications LLC
Contact number: XXXXXXXXXX

Identifying features in invitations from predatory publishers.

Guidance and Resources

To empower ECRs in their fight against predatory publishing, several resources and tools are available:

1. Rubrics for Journal Evaluation

The William H. Hannon Library developed a [rubric](#) to evaluate journal credibility. This questionnaire-based rubric guides researchers to consider specific criteria and score

journals as good, fair, or poor. ECRs can use this tool to assess a journal's authenticity.

2. Whitelists and Blacklists

Various organizations maintain whitelists of reputable journals and blacklists of predatory ones. Consulting these lists can aid ECRs in making informed decisions.

3. Think-Check-Submit Inventory

ECRs can use the "Think-Check-Submit" inventory, which provides simple and easily verifiable criteria to assess a journal's suitability and authenticity for their research.

Tentative 'Red Flags'

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Identifying a predatory journal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indexing in non-authentic or substandard indices • Could be lacking International Standard Serial Number (ISSN), Digital Object Identifier (DOI), or have copyright flaws • Publisher Credentials and Editor details are often missing • Misrepresentation of data regarding impact factor, number of citations, etc. • Previous publications are either missing or have blatant inaccuracies with grammatical errors • Often have similar sounding names or logos matching with reputed journals ("Clone Journals") • Feature non-academic advertisements on their websites |
| Submission process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide affirmation for rapid submission, peer-review, processing, publication, and online availability • Unusually high demands for APCs, which are often negotiable and don't have a standard payment portal (often approach through WhatsApp or third-party applications and not through any standardized portal) • Mostly instructions for authors are given obscurely, thus compromising the ethical standards • Usually, manuscripts are accepted with minimal corrections/comments • Hastened review process and publication usually within short time spans |
| E-mails | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalized e-invitations with grammatically incorrect or imprecise language, often praising the author's recent publications in acclaimed journals |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call for abstracts • Conference invitations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email invitations offering travel allowances but often with expensive registration fees. |

The Need for Regulation

The proliferation of predatory journals calls for urgent regulation to safeguard the credibility of [academic publishing](#). While established organizations like WAME, COPE, and CSE have laid out ethical guidelines, predatory publishers often disregard them for financial gain.

To address this, a comprehensive regulatory body could be established, building on existing resources like Beall's list. This body could rank predatory journals based on defined criteria, report their article processing charges, and offer guidance to young researchers, especially in developing countries where they are most vulnerable.

Conclusion

As early career researchers venture into the world of academic publishing, they must remain vigilant against predatory journals. By recognizing identifying features, seeking mentorship, and utilizing resources, ECRs can protect their research and contribute to the credibility of scientific literature. Together, we can raise awareness and advocate for stringent measures to minimize the influence of predatory publishers and ensure the integrity and authenticity of research.

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