

Predatory publications and their abuse of the open access model

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We, like many of our readers, receive quite a few emails (on average six daily, 7 days per week!) requesting contribution of papers or to serve on the editorial boards of online journals. There are, of course, ways to cut down on the number of unwanted emails, by adding their domain names to one's blocked-sender lists, or by clicking unsubscribe from their mailing lists. The wider issue is that I suspect the majority of these unsolicited approaches are from journals (N = 1317 at the time of writing)¹ which could be classified as predatory publications that operate using an open access business model. Similarly, a list of suspect predatory publishers is also available (N = 1173 at the time of writing).²

Open Access itself is a valid business model under which legitimate journals can publish articles (in fact, the *Journal of Nuclear Cardiology* currently has 144 open access articles, published through Springer's Open Choice option)—but it is also a model through which predatory journals can generate revenues from unsuspecting authors. The author is asked to submit a paper and then—following questionable, or non-existent, peer review—is asked to pay an article-processing charge to publish the paper. Predatory journals succeed through their efforts to look legitimate, e.g., providing a long list of indexing services which cover them, and by having names which sound like they could be legitimate journals. Sometimes, the names of predatory journals are

very similar to existing, legitimate journals. One of the journals listed at predatoryjournals.com, *International Journal of Nuclear Medicine & Radioactive Substances*, bears more than a passing resemblance to the *Journal of Nuclear Medicine* in name.

Another common tactic is to put 'International' before an existing journal title, e.g., 'International Journal of Nuclear Cardiology' (which fortunately does not yet exist!); almost one-half (672 of 1317) of the journals listed at predatoryjournals.com are 'International Journal of...,' and yet there are many legitimate, trustworthy journals whose names begin with these very same words—so one cannot simply rule out a journal because it starts with 'International Journal of...'

Parenthetically, there are 223 results indexed by PubMed on the subject of 'predatory publishing'; these items will have been published in what we consider to be legitimate publications, a belief supported by their indexing by stringent indexing services connected to PubMed. In other words, trusted publications have published more than 200 editorials, commentaries, and articles warning their readers of the risks of predatory publishers over the past few years!

There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to spotting a predatory publisher—one needs to assess a number of different facets. Advice has previously been published on what to look out for when identifying a predatory journal or publisher. Jeffrey Beall's now defunct list of predatory journals was compiled using criteria split into five categories: (1) Editor and Staff, (2) Business management, the publisher, (3) Integrity, (4) Other, and (5) Poor journal standards/practice (do not equal predatory criteria, but authors should consider these items prior to manuscript submissions). The criteria can be found in full in Laine and Winker.³ Similarly, the American Journal Experts have made their criteria available,⁴ which is given in Table 1.

We hope this information is helpful to our readers.

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Table 1. The criteria for determining predatory open access publishers according to the American Journal Experts [reprinted from Prater 2018-Ref. 4]

1. The journal asks for a submission fee instead of a publication fee or tries to keep the copyright to authors' work
 2. The editorial board is very small or "coming soon"
 3. A single publisher releases an overwhelmingly large suite of new journals all at one time
 4. The journal says an issue will be available at a certain time, but the issue never appears
 5. The website is not professional in quality
 6. The journal title notes a national or international affiliation that does not match its editorial board or location
 7. There are fundamental errors in the titles and abstracts
 8. The content of the journal varies from the title and stated scope
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Disclosures

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