Predatory Publishers: What to Know and How to Avoid Them
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What Are Predatory Publishers?
Predatory publishers exploit the emerging acceptance of open-access academic journals by making it attractive to publish (especially in a prestigious journal). They aggressively solicit articles from faculty and researchers with the intention of exploiting authors who need to publish their research findings in order to meet promotion, tenure or grant funding requirements.

The ultimate goal of these publishers is to make a profit — not to promote scholarly research. There are no concerns for the quality of work published and typically lack the peer-review process that legitimate journals provide. Articles are often accepted without any changes. They have unethical business practices (such as charging exorbitant author publishing fees).

Predatory conferences are a similar type of scam. These conferences appear to be legitimate scientific events, but in reality provide only a few presentations, or combine a wide range of topics into a single conference.

Why is it important for future doctors and pharmacists to learn about predatory publishing?

- Publishing in a predatory journal can harm your reputation, the reputation of your university/institution, and your professional career.
- Articles are often accepted without any changes.

Case Studies

MedCrave’s “Urology & Nephrology” published the above article about “Uromyistisis”. The paper was sent in under the name “Dr. Martin van Nostrand”. It was scheduled for peer review and was accepted with minor revisions three days later. The author was asked to pay $799.

Sounds legitimate, except it is a Seinfeld episode called “The Parking Garage” in which Jerry makes up a disease called “Uromyistisis Poisoning”. In other episodes, Kramer pretends to be Dr. Martin van Nostrand. Searching either “Uromyistisis Poisoning” or “Dr. Martin van Nostrand” in Google would immediately bring up results that this is from Seinfeld.

- “Cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs?" The surgical and neoplastic role of cacao extract in breakfast cereals" was a paper "authored" by "Pinkerton A. Lelbrair" and "Orson Welles". It was written in 2015 and accepted by more than 17 journals, including the "Global Journal of Otolaryngology" in 2017 (two years after the scam was exposed). The address of one of these publishers is actually a strip club. The fake author, "Dr. Lucas McGeorge" was invited to serve on the editorial board of one journal.

- A fake journal published a paper that just repeats the phrase, “Get me off Your F**king mailing list”.

- "Anna O. Szatzy" (see graphic below) applied to be an editor at 300 open access journals. She was accepted by 48, and four made her editor-in-chief. "Ozaz" means fraud in Polish.

How to Spot a Potential Predatory Publisher

Predatory Publishers tend to be savvy and employ tricks to seem legitimate. One such trick is to use a name similar to a prestigious journal’s. For example, “American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education” is a legitimate journal while “American Journal of Pharmacy and Health Research” is potentially predatory.

A website containing tips to confirm a journal’s credentials.

References


Some common characteristics of predatory publishers are:
- Webpages contain bogus journals.
- Images appear distorted or fuzzy.
- No ISSN.
- Vague or nonexistent contact information.
- Promise of rapid publication.
- Unclear or deceptive publishing fees and copyright policies.
- Fake names are listed on the editorial staff. Names of prominent scholars are included as editors without the knowledge or consent of these individuals.
- Published articles are plagiarized, completely fake, are scientifically unsound, or low quality.
- Websites contain many grammatical, spelling and formatting errors. An example from Medcrave is, “Construction for a written scientific manuscript needs deep study and writing the scientific facts with the top level of accuracy”.

Not All Open Source is the Same

Just because a journal is open access or charges a fee does not mean it is predatory. Many prestigious high impact journals are open access (such as the PLOS journals). The graphic below illustrates the difference.