



# Predatory Publishers: What to Know and How to Avoid Them

Susan Lesser, MLS and Lara Lasner-Frater, MA, MLS, Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine/College of Pharmacy Library

## What Are Predatory Publishers?

Predatory publishers exploit the emerging acceptance of open-access academic journals by making it attractive to publish (especially in a publish or perish world). 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. They have no concern 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?

- Predatory publishing damages the reputation of the biomedical and pharmaceutical fields due to a lack of comprehensive peer review. It helps create a rise in pseudo science and perpetuates bad research.
- Legitimate publishers are committed to preserving published work. Predatory publishers are focused on making money, and do not care about preserving the articles they "publish". Papers can disappear from a journal's website at any time, making it difficult to prove a paper was ever published.
- Predatory publishers often claim their journals are indexed in popular databases such as Scopus, PubMed, or Web of Science, when in fact they are not. It is easy to verify these claims by doing a journal search in these databases.
- Publishing in a predatory journal can harm your reputation, the reputation of your institution, and your career advancement.

## For More Information

For students and staff of the Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine and Touro College of Pharmacy, contact the library for assistance.  
<https://tourocom.touro.edu/sirota-library/>

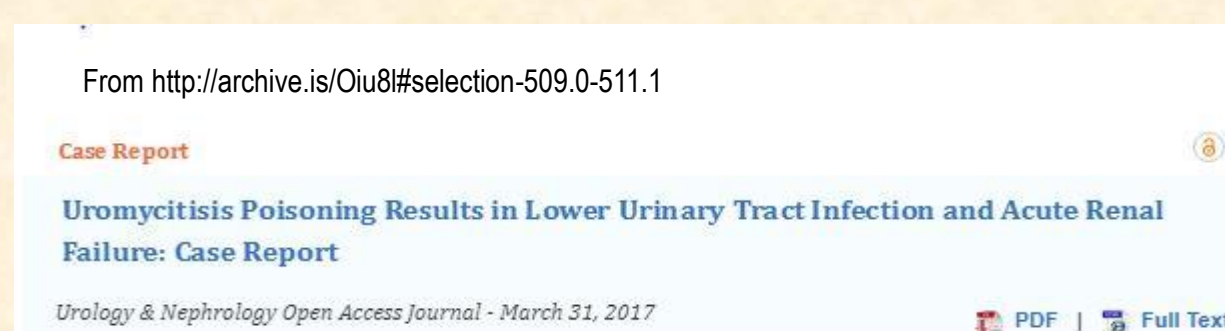
Predatory Conferences:  
<http://libguides.harlem.touro.edu/c.php?g=829080&p=5919785>  
Predatory Predators:  
<http://libguides.harlem.touro.edu/c.php?g=808730&p=5774144>

Lara Lasner-Frater, Electronic Resource Librarian [lara.lasner-frater@touro.edu](mailto:lara.lasner-frater@touro.edu)

Susan Lesser, Evening Librarian [susan.lesser2@touro.edu](mailto:susan.lesser2@touro.edu)

Other Touro students and staff, talk to your Touro Librarian.  
And visit <http://libguides.tourolib.org/c.php?g=148931&p=1038637>

## Case Studies

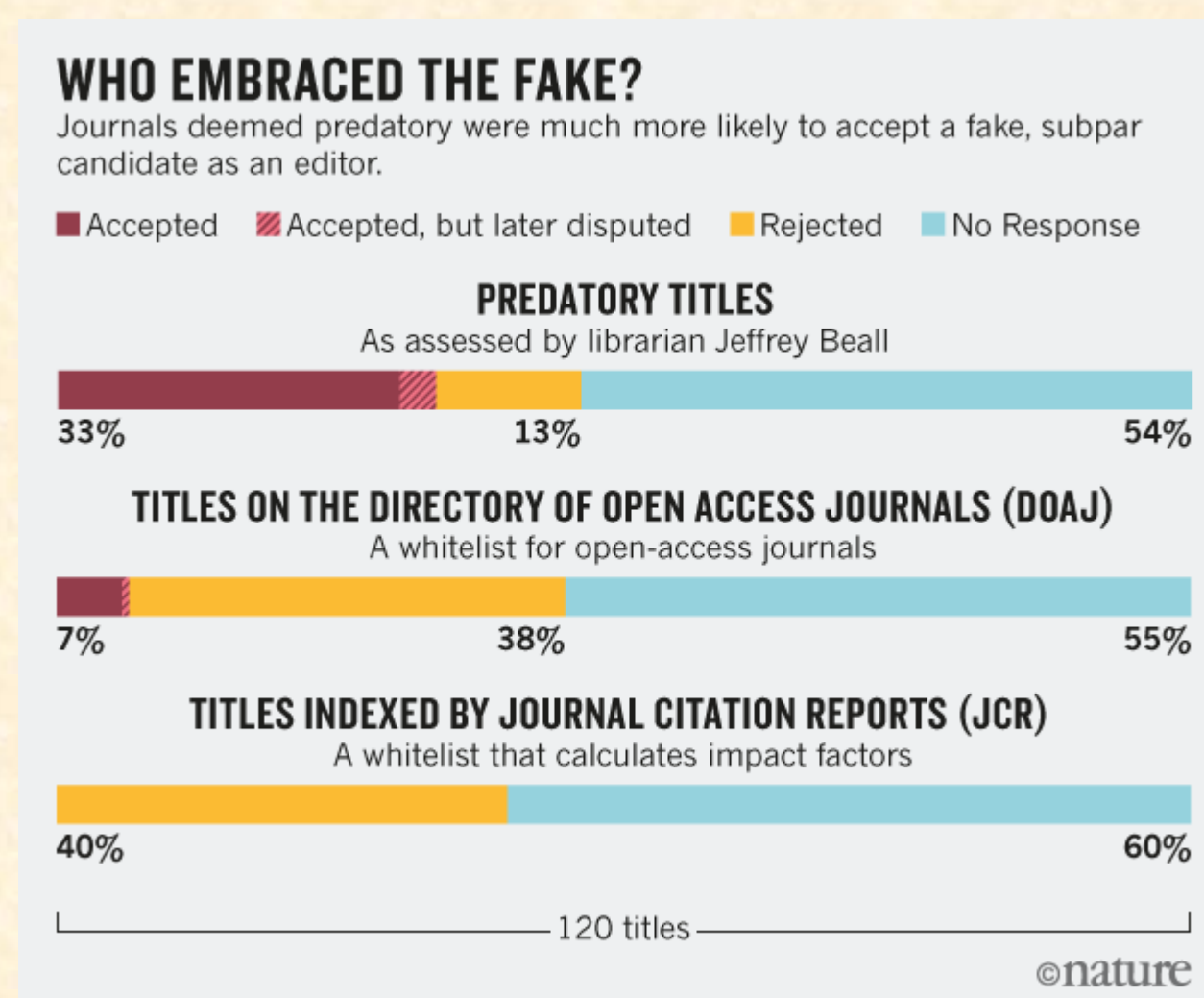


MedCrave's "Urology & Nephrology" published the above article about "Uromyistisis". The paper was sent in under the name "Dr. Martin van Nostrand". It was scheduled for peer review and was accepted with minor revisions three days later. The author was asked to pay \$799.

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 Coco Puffs? The surgical and neoplastic role of cacao extract in breakfast cereals" was a paper "authored" by "Pinkerton A. LeBrain" 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.
- Four journals accepted a paper on "Midi-chlorians" (scientific name for "The force" in the Star Wars movies). 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. Szust" (see graphic below) applied to be an editor at 360 open access journals. She was accepted by 48, and four made her editor-in-chief. "Oszust" 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.

Be wary of unsolicited e-mail invitations to submit to a journal or to become an editorial board member. Below is an example of an actual email from a potential predatory publisher.

Greetings from the editorial office!  
The paper published in *Journal of the Medical Library Association* - JMLA with the title *Apple Configurator 2 (version 2.3)* has left a deep impression on us.  
Scholars and researchers specializing in a wide range of disciplines have showed interests in your paper.

## Evaluating Predatory Journals

Predatory journals are journals that charge publication fees to authors without providing legitimate peer review services prior to publication.

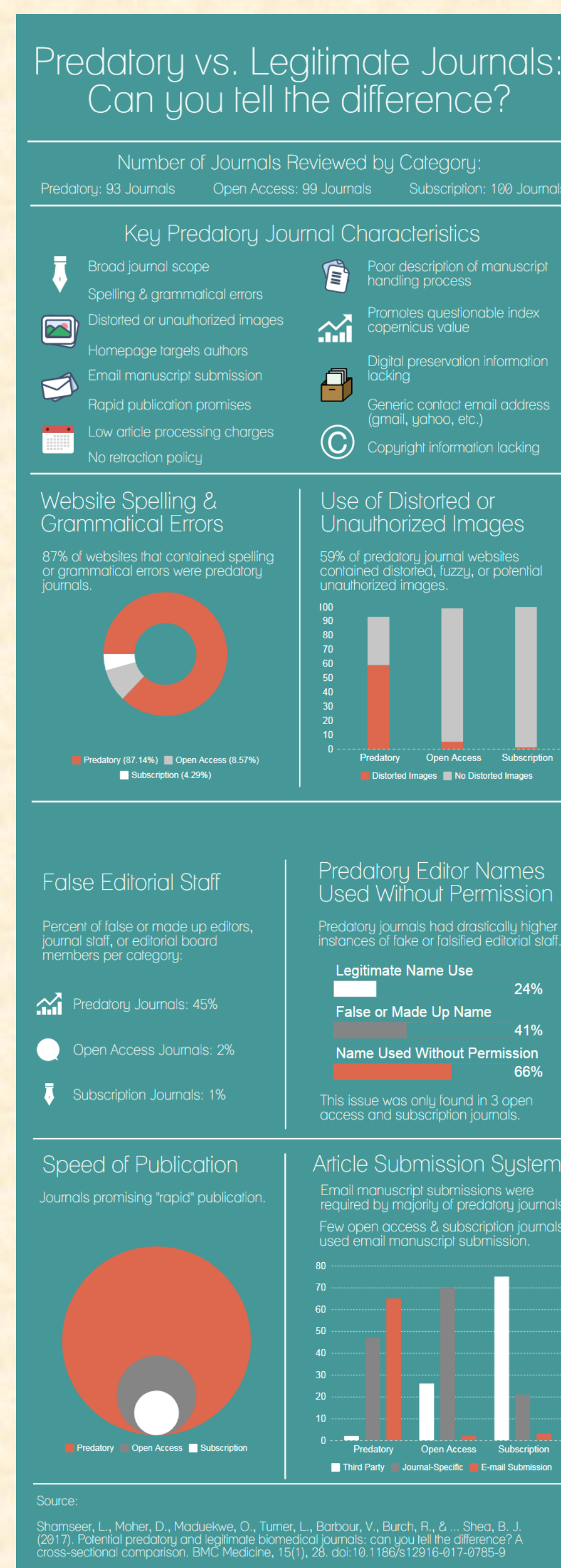


Some common characteristics of predatory publishers are:

- Webpages contain bogus journals.
- Images appear distorted or fuzzy.
- No ISSN.
- Vague or incomplete contact information.
- Promises 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.



## References

- Bowman, J. (2014) Predatory Publishing, Questionable Peer Review, and Fraudulent Conferences. *Am J Pharm Educ.* 2014; 78-10: 176 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4315198/>
- Kolata, G. A Scholarly Sting Operation Shines a Light on 'Predatory' Journals. *New York Times.* March 22, 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/22/science/open-access-journals.html>
- Moseman, A. Journal Trolled With Study About a Fake Disease From "Seinfeld" *Popular Mechanics.* April 2017 <https://www.popularmechanics.com/science/health/news/a26249/journal-seinfeld-disease/>
- McCool, J. Opinion: Why I Published in a Predatory Journal. *The Scientist.* April 6, 2017 <https://www.the-scientist.com/articles/view/articleNo/49071/title/Opinion-Why-I-Published-in-a-Predatory-Journal/>
- Neuroskeptic. Predatory Journals Hit By 'Star Wars' Sting. *Neuroskeptic blog.* Discover July 22, 2017. <http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/neuroskeptic/2017/07/22/predatory-journals-star-wars-sting/>
- Segran, E. Why A Fake Article Titled "Cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs" Was Accepted By 17 Medical Journals. Jan 27, 2015. *Fast Company.* <https://www.fastcompany.com/3041493/why-a-fake-article-cuckoo-for-cocoa-puffs-was-accepted-by-17-medical-journals>
- Sorokowski, P. Predatory journals recruit fake editor. *Nature.* 543, 481-483 (23 March 2017) <https://www.nature.com/news/predatory-journals-recruit-fake-editor-1.21662>
- Images from:  
<https://www.the-scientist.com/images/Opinion/2017/UNOAJ-04-00132.pdf>
- Evaluating Predatory Journals & Predatory vs. Legitimate Journals from Bueter, Ruth, George Washington University <http://libguides.gwu.edu/PredatoryPublishing/Home>