

EDITORIAL

Let the Author Beware: Preventing Publication Remorse

Have you been tempted to submit a manuscript to a journal in response to a flattering email solicitation? If so, it's important to adopt a mindset of "let the author beware!"

If you haven't been the recipient of one of those flattering emails yet, it's only a matter of time. With 140 predatory nursing journals from 75 publishers (Oermann et al., 2016) and the number rising each day, the chances are high you'll be next!

Publication remorse can be considered a first cousin to buyer's remorse. Most of us have had the experience of making a costly purchase without fully investigating the product, and then thinking "what have I done?" Buyer's remorse then sweeps in, bringing the (very uncomfortable) combined emotional mix of regret, anxiety, and even fear as the realization hits that you have sacrificed your hard-earned money to a product that does not perform as promised. Those same emotions can surface when you realize that you have sacrificed your prized manuscript to a predatory publisher that does not perform as promised and may even have career-damaging implications.

Predators are by definition persons or groups who exist by exploiting (preying on) others, and there is now a segment of the publishing industry that preys on unsuspecting authors. Entirely motivated by profit, ethical behavior in business, research, or publishing is disregarded by these publishers (Beall, 2017).

Protecting yourself from becoming a victim of predatory publishers and resulting publication remorse involves knowing why predatory publishers create a problem, how to identify them, and how to defend yourself against them.

WHY ARE PREDATORY JOURNALS A PROBLEM?

Predatory journals pose a threat both to science and to individual authors and their institutions. Scientific integrity suffers as research that falls below acceptable standards is published in massive volume because editorial supervision is lacking. On the individual level, authors are often unpleasantly surprised by article processing charges, ranging from a few hundred dollars to a few thousand dollars, because

specific charges may be difficult to locate on the website prior to submission. Once an article is submitted, the author starts receiving threatening emails demanding payment. Other problems related to acceptable publishing standards include lack of archiving and journals that ceased publishing after one to two– volumes (Beall, 2017; Oermann et al., 2016). The author then is unable to provide evidence of the publication.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PREDATORY JOURNALS/ PUBLISHERS

In 2015, the World Association of Medical Editors, Committee on Publication Ethics, Directory of Open Access Journals, and the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association collaborated to provide the Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing: <http://www.wame.org/about/principles-of-transparency-and-best-practice>. Journals that do not adhere to these principles should cause you as an author to beware, as they raise red flags!

Specifically, here is a list to guide you through an assessment of a journal prior to submitting. This list is based on a presentation given by Charon A. Pierson PhD, GNP, FAAN, FAANP (Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners*, Secretary and Interim Treasurer, Committee on Publication Ethics) at the International Academy of Nursing Editors 2017 meeting in Denver, Colorado.

Make sure you can identify the following:

1. The editor's credentials, institutional affiliation, and contact information
2. Policies related to discoverability and archiving
3. Peer review policies related to time of the review, who will be reviewing, process for resolving conflicts
4. Ethics policies (statements related to conflicts of interest statements, plagiarism screening, research misconduct, IRB approval, and clinical trial registration)
5. Statement of membership in the Committee on Publication Ethics

DEFENDING YOURSELF AGAINST PREDATORY JOURNALS

As an author, fully inform yourself about characteristics of predatory journals so that you take a "let the author beware" approach. As you develop the manuscript, take caution not to use articles from predatory publishers as references.

Before submitting your prized manuscript, use the website "Think. Check. Submit," which provides a checklist authors can use in the process of selecting a trusted journal (<http://thinkchecksubmit.org/>) that reinforces and covers the items above in a similar format.

CONCLUSION

Defending yourself from predatory publishers involves knowledge of why they create a problem, and how to identify and defend yourself against them. With a mindset of “let the author beware,” you’ll be much less likely to sacrifice your prized manuscript to a predatory publisher.

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