

Editorial

Discussing predatory journals – EASE at the 5th World Conference on Research Integrity

DOI: 10.20316/ESE.2017.43.033

Predatory publishing has been defined as exploitation of the open-access publishing model, in which publication fees are charged to authors but the service expected from a journal or publisher is not provided.^{1,2} The articles thus get published without peer review or standard editorial procedures, without author's complete approval, or often with unclear payment terms before publication. The number of open access journals and publishers marked as "potential, possible or probable" predatory journals is constantly growing, according to the list compiled by Jeffrey Beall. The numbers of email invitations from such journals and publishers are also proliferating in inboxes of researchers. We have also witnessed the emergence of highjacked journals and counterfeit "impact factor" companies,⁴ as well as false conferences⁶ and false editorial companies.⁷

Some experts criticise the definition of predatory publishing because it focuses only on the open-access model, arguing that the abuse of the publishing process for profit gains can occur in any current publishing model.⁸ In addition, open-access predatory publishing is particularly harming research in low- and middle-income countries where there is more pressure to publish research without adequate financial support.^{9,10} It is also harming small and scholarly journals, both those already established and newly emerging, because they may appear to have some characteristics of predatory journals but be fully legitimate publishing enterprises using the open-access business model. The fear of predatory journals has even prompted some policy makers to introduce rules aimed at reducing predatory publishing. For example, the Medical Council of India wanted to introduce the rule that publications in e-journals cannot be used in the assessments for appointments or promotions in medical institutions.¹¹

The last issue of *ESE* introduced the 5th World Conference on Research Integrity (WCRI), which will be held in Amsterdam, 28-31 May 2017.^{12,13} The conference site, the Vrije Universiteit, will also be the site of the 2017 EASE Annual General Meeting, which will be held at the 28th of May. We look forward to meeting you again after successful EASE Conference in Strasbourg last year.

EASE will actively participate in the WCRI by organising a symposium on predatory journals, scheduled for Monday, the 28th of May. This is a topic that fits well into the main WCRI theme of transparency and accountability because predatory publishing abuses transparency without being accountable. The EASE symposium will not only talk about predatory publishing and the damage it causes to science, but also explore possible actions to promote responsible publication practices and stop "predation" in research publishing. In some research disciplines, such as

medicine, the editors have formulated the principles for best practices in scholarly publishing.¹⁴ These principles reflect transparency of the publishing process and will be used among the criteria for the evaluation of membership applications to the editorial/journal organisations, in this case World Association of Medical Editors – WAME, Committee on Publication Ethics – COPE, Directory of Open Access Journals – DOAJ and the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association – OASP.¹⁴ A coalition of journals, publishers, librarians and organisations relevant for scholarly publishing has started the campaign "Think. Check. Submit" to inform authors about how to recognise legitimate journals and publishers when choosing where to submit their manuscript.¹⁵

The most recent revision of the "Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly work in Medical Journals" from the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) has also put the responsibility to authors to deal with predatory journals: "Authors have a responsibility to evaluate the integrity, history, practices and reputation of the journals to which they submit manuscripts."¹⁶ The American Psychological Association (APA) has also developed a list of questions for the researchers to explain predatory publishing and help them choose a legitimate journals for their publications.¹⁷

In order for EASE to truly represent its membership at the WCRI session, we would like to hear from all stakeholders in the publishing process and from different research fields about experiences with predatory journals and best ways to promote responsible and transparent publishing. I look forward to your experiences and ideas – please contact me by email at the address below.

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2 Beall J. Criteria for determining predatory open-access publishers. Available at: <https://scholarlyoa.com/2012/11/30/criteria-for-determining-predatory-open-access-publishers-2nd-edition/> (last accessed on January 12th 2017).

3 Anderson K. "Predatory" open access publishers – the natural extreme of an author-pays model. The Scholarly Kitchen, March 6, 2012. Available at: <https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2012/03/06/predatory-open-access-publishers-the-natural-extreme-of-an-author-pays-model/> (last accessed on January 12th 2017).

articles as part of the bachelor's degree programme. This training would strengthen the students' knowledge in research methodology and improve their writing skills for eventual scientific publications.

Conclusions

Medical students have little knowledge regarding access to Mexican scientific journals, printed journals or Internet access. 2nd and 4th year medical students showed similar proficiency regarding access to medical articles. It is necessary that the professors teach students to critically read, write, and publish articles while attending medical school.

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