

HOW TO SPOT PREDATORY PUBLISHERS



OFFICE OF SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION

What is a predatory publisher?



So-called predatory publishers are a growing phenomenon in the 21st century publishing industry. Generally predatory publishers are those who exploit the Open Access publishing model by charging a fee for the publication of material but without providing the services an author would expect such as peer review and editing.

Predatory publishers typically contact potential authors directly via email to offer their services and encourage publication. Many are also starting to branch out into offering academic conferences. To the researcher eager to make an impact with their work these can seem like very tempting offers but they often come with little academic reward.

Why are they a problem?

By not offering expected services such as peer review or editing, these publications allow poor quality research to be put into circulation. By appearing to be published in an academic journal which has checked its content this research masquerades as legitimate, something that can have potentially damaging consequences. Even if the individual piece of research is sound there is little academic merit to be gained by having it sit alongside work that is substandard or even wrong. Publishing with these publishers often entails signing away copyright which means that authors lose the right to publish elsewhere.



However, some people argue that these publishers fulfill a need. Some researchers who need their work in print for career or other reasons are happy to pay a fee for this to happen. In these cases they see so-called predatory publishers as operating a legitimate business model.

PREDATORY PUBLISHER CHECKLIST



TRANSPARENCY

- Is the publisher open about its practices?
- Do they publish on a vast range of topics?
- Assess the quality of the invitation – does it come from a named individual and an official email address?



FEES

- Are the author fees clearly explained and easy to find?
- Are there any hidden fees you need to be aware of e.g. are you or your library expected to buy a copy of your publication?



COPYRIGHT

- Are the rights of the author after publication clearly explained and easy to find?
- If the article is to be published Open Access is a Creative Commons license mentioned?



PEER REVIEW

- Is the review process clearly described?
- Is the stated time for review realistic?
- If an impact factor is given for the journal, it is correct?



EDITORIAL BOARD

- Are the members of the Board and a named Editor in Chief listed on the website?
- Are any of the names recognisable as experts in the field?
- Are Board members aware that they are listed?

PREDATORY PUBLISHER CHECKLIST



ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP

- Is the publisher connected to a recognised institution?
- Are they affiliated with a recognised industry association?



WEBSITE QUALITY

- Does the website have a professional look and feel?
- Are there spelling or grammatical errors?



INDEXING

- Is the journal indexed by the typical databases in the field?
- Are other journals by the same publisher indexed?



QUALITY OF PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS

- Are these of a high standard?
- Are there basic spelling and grammatical errors?
- Are there mistakes in the title or abstract that may indicate that the publisher or reviewers are not familiar with the field?

REMEMBER:

There may be valid reasons why you answer no to some of these questions. Publication practices vary from country to country and it is important to consider cultural differences. Be careful not to use any of these factors in isolation and always use your judgement.