

# Predatory journals

and how to avoid them

You may have seen the posters I've hung by the printers, about **Think.Check.Submit.**? How many of you have heard the term *predatory journals*, or *predatory publishers* before? How many of you have received emails from publishers asking you to publish in their journals, or come to their conferences?

## What are they?

Nothing new – vanity press, scams in general

No scientific interest, only in it for the money

Exploiting the Open Access model

Predatory journals are nothing new. It's like all scams, promising you something you value for money, but not giving you what they promised after you pay them. In this case it's specific to academic publishing. Targeting all researchers, but especially young, inexperienced, or desperate-to-publish scientists. They usually promise a quick peer-review process, without actually having one. And they may or may not even publish your paper.

They thrive because of the Open Access financial model, where authors pay a fee to have their papers published openly, and not behind a paywall. This is usually called APC, or Article Publishing Charges.

Read more:

Eriksson, Stefan, and Gert Helgesson. "The False Academy: Predatory Publishing in Science and Bioethics." *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 20, no. 2 (June 2017): 163–70. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11019-016-9740-3>.

Beall, Jeffrey. "What I Learned from Predatory Publishers." *Biochemia Medica* 27, no. 2 (June 15, 2017): 273–78. <https://doi.org/10.11613/BM.2017.029>.

## How do they do it?

Usually small, one-man operations

Spam email

Can hijack existing journals or publishers ([real](#) / [fake](#))

Fake ISSNs

Fake editors

A predatory journal is usually a one-man operation, setting up websites of fake journals, and sending spam email require little effort. Even I who never have published anything receive these emails weekly.

It's not just fake titles and fake ISSNs though. Sometimes the scam involves hijacking existing journals, copying entire websites and posing as them. This is maybe more famously done with bank-websites, but it is basically the same thing. As an example I have linked to the Icelandic journal Jökull, and it's fake counterpart.

In addition predatory journals can ask you to become an editor, sometimes they don't even ask. They do this to heighten their own reputation of course. Making it more difficult to spot the scam.

Read more:

Dadkhah, Mehdi, Tomasz Maliszewski, and Jaime A. Teixeira da Silva. "Hijacked Journals, Hijacked Web-Sites, Journal Phishing, Misleading Metrics, and Predatory Publishing: Actual and Potential Threats to Academic Integrity and Publishing Ethics." *Forensic Science, Medicine, and Pathology* 12, no. 3 (September 2016): 353–62. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12024-016-9785-x>.

Bowman, John D. "Predatory Publishing, Questionable Peer Review, and Fraudulent Conferences." *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education* 78, no. 10 (December 15, 2014). <https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe7810176>.

Sorokowski, Piotr, Emanuel Kulczycki, Agnieszka Sorokowska, and Katarzyna Pisanski. "Predatory Journals Recruit Fake Editor," 2017.

# Naivety vs. Deceit

Predatory journals open up the possibility to pay-to-publish. This attracts the ones who actively want to cheat the system, or have their conclusions published. Like the diploma mills, it *can* be a way to easily get your paper published, but at what cost?

## Consequences

Loss of money and intellectual capital

Difficulty withdrawing / Papers are blocked

Can have negative effect on your career (doubt: naive or deceitful?)

Destructive to Open Access

Corrupting science in general (no peer-review)

In addition to loss of money, you might lose your paper, it may be published by a fake journal but by the time you realise it is usually too late or impossible to withdraw it, preventing you from publishing it in a real journal. You will be less cited, and people might suspect it was intentional on your part. This will hurt your reputation.

It is also destructive to the Open Access movement as a whole, making scientists sceptical and apprehensive about publishing even in real Open Access journals.

Not every paper in a fake journal is bad, but it will be ever more difficult to tell which is which. In scientific indexes, such as Google Scholar, you will find a mix of both junk and real science, and the fact that it is open and available makes it confusing to the public.

With little or no peer-review errors or deceit can live on and be cited again and again, corrupting science in general.

Read more:

Ferris, Lorraine E., and Margaret A Winker. "Ethical Issues in Publishing in Predatory Journals." *Biochemia Medica* 27, no. 2 (June 15, 2017): 279–84.

<https://doi.org/10.11613/BM.2017.030>.

# How to avoid them

## Tips

- Ask your colleagues if they know about the journal.
- Check the [Norwegian register for scientific journals, series and publishers](#).
- Check [Bealls Blacklist of journals](#), or Google the title of the journal + the word “predatory”, others might have published their experiences.
- If the journal is open access, check if it is listed in the [Directory of Open Access Journals \(DOAJ\)](#).
  - And check if the publisher belongs to the [Open Access Scholarly Publishers' Association \(OASPA\)](#).
- [Think. Check. Submit.](#)

## Red flags

- Poor language or misspelling in emails or website.
- Unclear country of origin, or difficulty finding contact information.
- Poor information about the editor(s), sometimes fake names are used, other times names of real researchers are used without their knowledge.
- A business model based on Article Processing Charges (APC), or publications fees. Sometimes the cost is not divulged until after you have submitted your manuscript.
- No, or poor, peer review process. Usually promising “fast publication”.

Come to the dark side, we have quick / no peer-review...

Read more: <https://www.unis.no/avoiding-predatory-journals/>