Fake open access journals – “predatory journals”
- an increasing problem

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Every day we receive emails from different types of open access journals advertising for publishing manuscripts in their Journal. We are surprised by this development. At first sight, it may seem worthwhile, but upon closer inspection, you discover that most of these journals are illegitimate in that they only want to make money. Usually they take huge publication fees. One of our students submitted a manuscript to one of these journals. The journal had acknowledged people on the editorial board, and had a good description of their journal policy, peer review process, aims and scope on their website. We contacted one of the researchers on the Editorial Board, who was surprised about being listed in this Editorial Board as he had never been approached about it. After a few days, the student received an acceptance of her article without any comments from editors or peer reviewers. Realizing this was odd, she tried to retract the paper, but the journal declined to do so. We were left no choice but to contact the legal department to receive help in handling the situation. The journal in question is a predatory journal. The term “predatory journal” was introduced in 2010 by Jeffrey Beall to describe unscrupulous open access journals (or publishers) who were publishing articles with no real peer review process. Many of the predatory journals charge high publication fees. Jeffrey Beall has made a list of predatory journals and publishers: http://beallslist.weebly.com/standalone-journals.html. This year marks the seventh annual release or announcement of this list, which is continuously updated. There are now over one thousand predatory open-access publishers and journals on the list.

The business model for the predatory journals is based on the “gold open access model”, as the publishing costs are covered by fees charged to the authors after their manuscripts have been accepted (1). The advantage of this publishing model is that the published articles have open access for everyone free of charge.

There are many advantages to open access journals for both authors and readers. Funding organizations are increasingly demanding that the published article, based on money from the grant, is published in open access journals. The European Research Council has been supporting the principle of open access to the published research articles as an important part of its mission (2). Department of Homeland Security performed a plan to support increased public access to the results of research funded by the federal government (3). Denmark has developed a national strategy for open access and the vision of this strategy is described as “To create free access for all citizens, researchers and companies to research articles from Danish research institutions financed by public authorities and/or private foundations” (4).

Being editors of a small new journal, we know that new journals always have to start from the bottom, only being indexed in few databases, and without having any impact factor calculated. The reason for starting another journal should not primarily be economic profit and in our opinion, one should basically only consider starting a new journal if there is either a lack of good journals in the specific subject area or wanting to start a platinum open access journal, i.e. an open access journal with no publication fees (1). We are not against publication fees, and we realize that when our journal grows beyond a certain limit, we will not be able to run it without considering a small publication fee from the authors. However, the publication fee should be kept low and other ways of getting income should be considered, e.g., advertisements. Most importantly, the focus must be on quality and not quantity. We have been lucky to receive grant money from The Nordic Board for Periodicals in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NOP-HS), the Psychiatric Research Unit, Region Zealand, and the Center of
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In all types of businesses, there are people cheating. An increasing number of open access journals are now simply trying to make money without any scholarships involved. This makes it difficult for journals like the Scandinavian Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychology to develop into a new quality journal in the area.

Chrissy Prater has described some ways to identify a questionable journal. Some of the most important ones are; 1) The journal asks for a submission fee instead of a publication fee, or tries to keep the copyright to the authors’ work; 2) The Editorial Board is either very small or “coming soon”; 3) The website is not professional when it comes to quality; 4) The journal title notes a national or international affiliation that does not match its editorial board or location; 5) The content of the journal varies from the title and stated scope.

We really hope that more people will find it easier to recognize these journals and that the list of predatory journals will be smaller in the future. It is crucially important that scientific journals are of high quality so that one can trust the research being published and preferably with open access to everyone.

References


