



Exposing the perils of predatory journals to safeguarding academic integrity

Sweta Giri^{1,2}, Phurb Dorji³, Karma Tenzin^{4,5}

¹ Emergency Department, Jigme Dorji National Referral Hospital, National Medical Services

² Faculty of Postgraduate Medicine, Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan

³ Kidu Medical Service Center, Thimphu, Bhutan

⁴ Center for research in Respiratory and Neuroscience, Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical sciences of Bhutan

⁵ Faculty of Undergraduate Medicine, Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical sciences of Bhutan

Predatory publishing, a rampant issue in the academic world, refers to the unethical practices of certain publishers who prioritize profit over scholarly integrity. Predatory journals prey on novice researchers and academicians for financial profit via article processing charges without meeting the standard publishing standards¹. Such is its rampancy that it has crept its roots amongst Bhutanese researchers and academicians.

Nearly all researchers would have received at least 1 email correspondence requesting them to submit an article to their journal. Such emails contain excessively complimentary language, offer assurances to publish any material submitted by the author, or pledge to expedite the review and publication process beyond conventional timelines². While it is tempting to submit to such journals, it is crucial to note that these are predatory journals whose main goal is profit³. Predatory publishers make fraudulent claims to provide true peer review when they do not actually do it. This practice of articles being published under the false pretense of being peer reviewed results in flawed research and inaccurate information entering the research community.

With avenues like the “Beall’s list” and “Think. Check. Submit” providing a list of predatory publishers and journals, seasoned researchers and academicians are less likely to browse through these journals^{4,5}. Therefore, publishing your work in these predatory journals could make your work hard to find, as well as less likely to be used / cited by others. This also means that even if your article contained good quality information, it might not be read, appreciated or applied by the scientific community².

Furthermore, publishing in predatory journals could cost you a lot. While you will be made to pay a sum for submitting your article, predatory journals are known to not actually publish these articles or take down articles from online versions without notice. Once submitted to a journal, other (legitimate) publishers

will not accept articles for review². This not only diminishes the motivation of young researchers but also deprives them of the appropriate recognition they rightfully deserve¹.

It goes without saying that researchers have inadvertently enabled predatory publishers to thrive. This is because researchers today are under strong pressure to publish, especially so in universities where faculty are mandated to publish for advancing their career in academia. While some unknowingly get fooled and end up submitting to predatory journals, some search for a short-cut to getting published, bypassing the traditional academic publishing route, which might be slower than predatory journals. Irrespective of the reason, publication in predatory journals will not be recognized by reputed universities, resulting in a loss of academic credibility.

What can we do as researchers and academicians?

We need to start by understanding that predatory journals publish for profit and without any genuine concern for content. We need to realize that they threaten the integrity of academic publishing by targeting eager to publish authors or our novice, young researchers. Secondly, institutions need to raise awareness and disseminate information about predatory publishing as well as information on avenues that help determine whether a publisher / journal is reputable or not. Furthermore, institutes should promote forums where individuals who encountered the repercussions of predatory publishing can share their experiences. Institutes must make it known that publications in predatory journals are typically disregarded for doctoral theses or grant applications. It also jeopardizes their future prospects because publishing in these journals could result in permanent blacklisting from reputable indexed journals⁶.

Predatory journals swamp the internet with insignificant papers, selling substandard science under the guise of legitimate publication. Tackling this problem necessitates a collaborative approach from researchers, institutions, and academic communities. In Beall’s words, the best defense against predatory journals is “enhancing the scientific literacy of researchers to enable them to identify these predatory journals and publications”⁷. It is imperative to increase awareness about the menace posed by predatory journals and disseminate strategies

Corresponding author:

Sweta Giri

swetagiri1992@gmail.com

for differentiating between predatory and legitimate ones. This endeavor is vital for maintaining ethical publishing norms and preserving the credibility of scholarly communication.

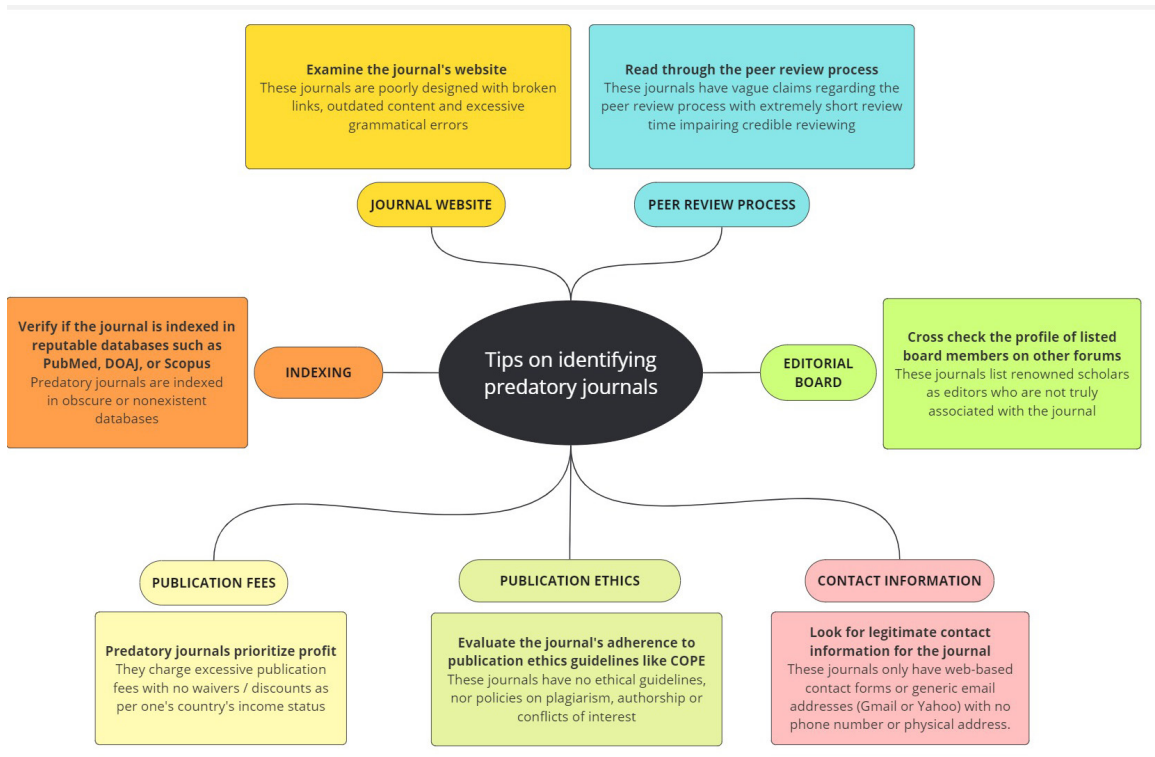


Figure 1. General tips on identifying predatory journals

REFERENCES

1. Sharma H, Verma S. Predatory journals: The rise of worthless biomedical science. *J Postgrad Med.* 2018 Oct 1;64(4):226. [[PubMed](#) | [Full Text](#) | [DOI](#)]
2. Elmore SA, Weston EH. Predatory Journals: What They Are and How to Avoid Them. *Toxicol Pathol.* 2020 Jun 1;48(4):607–10. [[PubMed](#) | [Full Text](#) | [DOI](#)]
3. Eriksson S, Helgesson G. The false academy: predatory publishing in science and bioethics. *Med Health Care Philos.* 2017 Jun 1;20(2):163–70. [[PubMed](#)] [[Full Text](#)] [[DOI](#)]
4. Beall's List – of Potential Predatory Journals and Publishers [Internet]. [cited 2024 Mar 27]. [[Full Text](#)]
5. Identify trusted publishers for your research • Think. Check. Submit. [Internet]. [cited 2024 Mar 27]. [[Full Text](#) |
6. Rydholm A. Beware of predatory journals. *Acta Orthop.* 2017 Nov 2;88(6):576. [[PubMed](#)] [[Full Text](#)] [[DOI](#)]
7. Beall J. Predatory publishers are corrupting open access. *Nature.* 2012;489(7415). [[PubMed](#) | [Full Text](#) | [DOI](#)]