

Delving into the Dark World of Predatory Open Access Publishing: An Introduction

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Predatory journals represent a global threat to scientific integrity and public trust in science. They have been described as a form of robbery and even a pandemic. They accept articles for publication - against payment of high authors' fees — without performing promised checks for issues such as plagiarism, scientific quality or ethical approval. Naive readers are not the only victims. Many researchers are duped into submitting to predatory journals, thereby damaging their reputations. The lack of adequate editorial practices and scientific review of accepted manuscripts leads to the publication of poor-quality research, the spread of wrong, unsafe or even dangerous recommendations for practice and policies, and the unfair recognition of unethical and unscientific conduct. Some estimates say that about one and a half million articles have been published in predatory journals in 2021. Predatory publishing also infiltrated in many reputable citation databases such as PubMed and Scopus. A recent study published in *Scientometrics* found that 2.8% of all the articles indexed in the Scopus database over the period 2015-2017 had been published in predatory journals.

How many times a week do you receive an email from an unknown publisher, who asks you to submit one of your papers to one of its journals, and who offers a quick and easy peer review process? What has predatory publishing to do with open access? How can we spot and avoid predatory journals? Which are the benefits and limitations of the available instruments to address predatory publishing?

These are amongst the key questions that this workshop will seek to address. We welcome participants to raise more questions and share experiences.

The most well known definition of predatory journals

“Predatory journals prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterized by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices” (Grudniewicz et al., 2019, Nature, 576, 210-212).

Some numbers

Number of predatory publishers contained in the Beall’s list in 2014 (Shen and Bjork, BMS Medicine, 2015).	1,000
Number of predatory journals contained in the Beall’s list in 2014 (Shen and Bjork, BMS Medicine, 2015).	12,000
Number of predatory journals contained in the Cabells’ Blacklist in 2020 (The Economist, 2020).	13,000
Number of potential predatory journals contained in the Cabells’ Blacklist in 2022 (Cabells’ Predatory Report, 2022).	15,500
Number of predatory journals contained in the Beall’s list which are indexed in the Scopus database in the 2015-2017 period (Machacek, and Srholec, Scientometric, 2021)	324 (164,000 articles)
Last reliable estimate of the annual number of articles published in predatory journals (year 2014; Shen and Bjork, BMS Medicine, 2015).	420,000
Average annual growth of the number of articles published in predatory journals in the 2010-2014 period. Estimate by Shen and Bjork (BMS Medicine, 2015).	68%
My estimate of the annual number of articles published in predatory journals in 2021.	1,500,000