

PREDATORY PUBLISHING IS NO JOKE

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I often receive e-mails inviting me to submit papers to what seem to be legitimate journals. The journals' names look familiar, their editorial boards list well-credentialed professionals, and some of these journals even claim to have impact factor rankings. Their invitations are tempting, promising expedient peer review and publication. If I were a new author eager to publish and unfamiliar with standard publishing industry practices, I might respond. And I'd be dismayed to find that, upon submission, a hefty article processing fee would be charged, and my article would receive little or no dissemination. Instead, I'd have become yet another author victimized by predatory publishers.

In 2009, University of Colorado Denver librarian Jeffrey Beall began tracking these publishers. He started Scholarly Open Access (www.scholarlyoa.com), where he offers criteria for determining whether a publisher or journal is legitimate or predatory and maintains a list of predatory publishers and journals. Last August, Beall presented his work at the annual meeting of the International Academy of Nursing Editors (INANE). Inspired, a group of editors formed the INANE Predatory Publishing Practices Collaborative in order to raise awareness in the nursing community. In September, the group published an article on predatory publishing in *Nurse Author and Editor*, and encouraged editors to "spread the word" in order to educate readers. (The article is available for free at www.nurseauthoreditor.com/article.asp?id=261; registration is required.)

Predatory publishers take advantage of the relatively new open access model in publishing. In this model, authors or funding agencies pay the publisher a fee in order to make their article freely available or "open" to all. Open access is a legitimate model; many well-regarded publishers and journals (including the *American Journal of Nursing*) now offer open access options to authors. But legitimate publishers do so only after an article has been vetted through standard peer review and acceptance processes. Predatory publishers do token peer review or none at all.

The sole aim of predatory publishers is to profit. Their article processing fees typically aren't disclosed until after an article has been accepted and the author has signed a copyright agreement granting the publisher all rights. This ensures two results: first, the author's work is essentially held hostage, published only upon payment of the processing fee (which can be \$1,000 or more). Second, because of the sham peer review, once published, the article will lack all scholarly credibility.

How can you ensure that you're not submitting your work to a predatory publisher? The INANE collaborative recommends the following:

- Check Beall's list of predatory publishers (www.scholarlyoa.com), which he updates regularly.
- Check the Directory of Open Access Journals (<http://doaj.org>), which "indexes and provides access to quality open access, peer-reviewed journals."

- Check INANE's directory of reputable nursing journals (<http://nursingeditors.com/journals-directory>).
- Verify listed impact factors or other rankings.

The collaborative also lists several “red flags” that should raise your suspicions about a journal’s integrity. These include overly flattering solicitations to submit articles or guest edit, a lack of contact information for the journal, a lack of evidence of the editor’s expertise or professional standing, the promise of unusually short submission-to-publication times (such as a month or less), and a journal name that sounds vague (for example, “The Journal of Care”) or is overly similar to that of a well-known journal.

The *American Journal of Nursing* supports INANE’s initiative. It’s especially timely now, as more nurses are pursuing advanced degrees and seeking to publish their scholarly work, per the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine’s 2010 report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*. They will need guidance from faculty and other mentors to steer them through the publication process.

As the INANE collaborative notes, the “proliferation of pseudoscholarly activity could significantly flood the market with journals and articles that discredit the profession. In health care, this threat is even more serious, as the pseudoscience and poor scholarship published by predatory journals could conceivably result in harm to patients and the health information-seeking public.” Predatory publishing poses a threat that extends beyond authors to all providers, patients, and health care consumers. It’s up to all of us to ensure the integrity of our professional literature.

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