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Predator Journals: An Urgent and Global Problem.

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Predator Journals: An Urgent and Global Problem

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Most certainly every spine care professional has gotten one of the emails from journals with fancy and impressive names, but unfortunately not known by anyone. Flattering in content, proclaiming you the top expert in a field or specialty that sometimes is not even your own. All they need to finish up their issue, meet their deadline, and start the paramount issue of the year is this one article by YOU. You pick the subject, the format, the extent of the manuscript, and they publish it—100% guaranteed! The publishing process? Or any review process? No details mentioned.

Of course, the article would be due in a few days.

In a world of “publish-or-perish” and CVs where publication lists sometimes are longer than surgery catalogs, this has found a weak spot. A quick publication, semi-effortless with guaranteed acceptance can be just too tempting for many. With a potentially global reach and usually a distinguished journal name, junior or inexperienced authors, frequently from non-academic environments with limited resources or training, may be lured into submitting their work.

Seemingly like, “Submit your work, pay the publication fee and you’re done.”

For an open access journal like the *Global Spine Journal*, the rigorous standards of scientific publishing, blinded peer review, an outstanding global editorial board with a strategic vision, and a task by a leading international organization like AOSpine are absolutely paramount and undisputed.

The growing shift to publishing in open access formats has changed the landscape. Researchers are looking for options in open access journals, and the publication fee is often factored into the research budget. When authors who submit their work to the *Global Spine Journal* are members of AOSpine, their publication fee is even waived. This fee ensures an immense behind-the-scenes workflow, and a quality publication demands expertise that international publishers like SAGE are willing to provide. Enabling high-quality peer review, manuscript handling, proofreading, typesetting, production, possibly printing and shipping, and so on, are expensive but necessary aspects of publishing. Owners and/or publishers of those predator journals are trying to save all those steps toward quality. They publish everything as long as the publication fee is paid.

Predator journal publishers usually collect an exceptionally high fee and they guarantee publication of the manuscript. Peer review? Faked or omitted completely. Editorial board? Exists on paper only. Publisher’s quality services? Not provided. Listing in an established scientific index? Not really. Often authors are informed about fees only after acceptance of the manuscript. And even lowest quality manuscript or hoax papers are readily accepted.

The site predatoryjournals.com lists a set of basic criteria that should cause suspicion about a potentially predatory journal. Lists of fake editorial board members, fake or nonexistent impact factors, and false ISSNs are only some of them.

All this is based around Beall’s list, created by a Denver librarian in 2008. Due to ongoing threats, he discontinued this list in 2017, and it has since been taken up by an anonymous group.

Some predator criminals even “hijack” authentic journals. They copy websites and branding of authentic scientific publications for their own purposes to cover up their activities.

Other aspects of predatory publishing include fake or misleading metrics to generate the appearance of scientific merit. Criteria of fake metrics include payment of journals or publishers to be included in the “index,” guaranteeing a rising value annually. Additionally, a metric having the term “impact factor” in its name should raise suspicion. Also nontransparent and unscientific methodology and missing information about the company and the expertise behind the specific metric should be noted. The site predatoryjournals.com keeps a list of the misleading metrics of predatory publishing.

With open access publishing on the rise, so does awareness of the problem. And while those emails from Nigerian princes promising to give away their inherited millions have all but disappeared, there is hope that spam emails asking for your outstanding manuscripts will disappear alike.

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