

The false academy : predatory publishing in science and bioethics / Stefan Eriksson, Gert Helgesson. – Med Health Care Philos, published online in open access 7-10-2016
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24 Characteristics of a predatory journal

Note that the idea with this list is not to say that any journal fulfilling any of the points below is a predatory journal. But the more points on the list that apply to the journal at hand, the more sceptical you should be.

The publisher is not a member of any recognized professional organisation committed to best publishing practices (like COPE or EASE)

The journal is not indexed in well-established electronic databases (like Medline or Web of Science)

The publisher claims to be a “leading publisher” even though it just got started

The journal and the publisher are unfamiliar to you and all your colleagues

The papers of the journal are of poor research quality, and may not be academic at all (for instance allowing for obvious pseudo-science)

There are fundamental errors in the titles and abstracts, or frequent and repeated typographical or factual errors throughout the published papers

The journal website is not professional

The journal website does not present an editorial board or gives insufficient detail on names and affiliations

The journal website does not reveal the journal’s editorial office location or uses an incorrect address

The publishing schedule is not clearly stated

The journal title claims a national affiliation that does not match its location (such as “American Journal of...” while being located on another continent) or includes “international” in its title while having a single-country editorial board

The journal mimics another journal title or the website of said journal

The journal provides an impact factor in spite of the fact that the journal is new (which means that the impact cannot yet be calculated)

The journal claims an unrealistically high impact based on spurious alternative impact factors (such as 7 for a bioethics journal, which is far beyond the top notation)

The journal website posts non-related or non-academic advertisements

The publisher of the journal has released an overwhelmingly large suite of new journals at one occasion or during a very short period of time

The editor in chief of the journal is editor in chief also for other journals with widely different focus

The journal includes articles (very far) outside its stated scope

The journal sends you an unsolicited invitation to submit an article for publication, while making it blatantly clear that the editor has absolutely no idea about your field of expertise

Emails from the journal editor are written in poor language, include exaggerated flattering (everyone is a leading profile in the field), and make contradictory claims (such as “You have to respond within 48 h” while later on saying “You may submit your manuscript whenever you find convenient”)

The journal charges a submission or handling fee, instead of a publication fee (which means that you have to pay even if the paper is not accepted for publication)

The types of submission/publication fees and what they amount to are not clearly stated on the journal’s website

The journal gives unrealistic promises regarding the speed of the peer review process (hinting that the journal’s peer review process is minimal or non-existent)—or boasts an equally unrealistic track-record

The journal does not describe copyright agreements clearly or demands the copyright of the paper while claiming to be an open access journal

The journal displays no strategies for how to handle misconduct, conflicts-of-interests, or secure the archiving of articles when no longer in operation