

## **A Guidance Document on Selecting a Journal to Publish Your Research**

On one's curriculum vitae, a publication remains forever, unless retracted. Thus, it is critical to select only journals that do not reflect poorly on our institution or ourselves. A quick and seemingly guaranteed acceptance by a soliciting journal may seem like a blessing but could have untoward implications. There are no codified ways to identify so-called "predatory" journals. Predatory open-access publishing is an exploitative business model that involves charging publication fees to authors without providing the editorial and publishing services associated with legitimate journals (open access or not).

These journals often share certain characteristics.

1. Impact Factor (IF--Thompson-Reuters) is < 2.0, but there is no hard threshold. It should also be recognized that many reputable peer review journals cater to limited audiences, e.g., pediatric and adolescent gynecology, or users of an uncommon methodology. Moreover, an IF may not yet exist in a nascent journal.

Claims of high ratings by an unfamiliar source should be verified by the university librarians.

2. The journal solicits you directly by e-mail, not infrequently with an awkward salutation: e.g., "Dear Dr. Simpson, Joe....". This is a clue that your name has probably been obtained from vendors or congress organizers, who can sell their contact lists. No medical organization (e.g., American Society Human Genetics) that has your membership email can sell their list (privacy concerns). If the society considers a journal or a vendor worthy of its members being made aware, the society does so using its own server in an e-blast.
3. Solicitation typically comes directly from the publisher. The sender may identify only by first name and does not provide information that can be traceable by phone or street address. A web site may not exist.
4. Frequently a sense of urgency is conveyed. "Need only one more article, which must be received in ten days." Peer review and publication are promised in an unreasonable timeline, e.g., 5-7 days.
5. No information may be provided on the Scientific or Medical Editor-in-Chief, or the Editorial Board. If so, it will be difficult to be assured of the company with which your publication would be associated.

6. There is no indication that the journal has an affiliation with an existing professional organization. This is not essential, but if an organization is not cited one should then expect a named editorial board.
7. Established journals also solicit, and indeed new journals must. However, expect this to come from the Editor in Chief, not from an unnamed person difficult to trace.
8. Mimicking the name or web site style of more established journals.
9. A typical business model for predatory journals is fee-based to ensure “open access”. Open access is cited as necessary to pay for loss of advertising income. The strategy is to accumulate a sufficient number of articles for which authors have paid fees, thus supporting staff and publication costs. The usual fee/charge is rarely disclosed in the initial solicitation. Sometimes the fee is “discounted”, ostensibly given exigency of time.

On the other hand, some of the journals with the highest impact factors charge fees (e.g., PNAS) defend this on the basis of lack of conflicts.

10. There is no schedule for issues (quarterly, biannually etc.) and the table of contents may not be easily available online.

### **SUMMARY**

No red line distinguishes the traditional peer review journals to which we aspire from those others considered “predatory”. However, characteristics cited here justify close scrutiny. In an effort to distinguish legitimate journals and publishers from non-legitimate ones, principles of transparency and best practice have been identified and issued collectively by the [Committee on Publication Ethics](#) and the [Directory of Open Access Journals](#), the [Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association](#) and the [World Association of Medical Editors](#) (1). The NIH has issued a statement on article publication for NIH funded research (2). Stop Predatory Journals is another resource (3).

Our university librarian can serve as a resource to help in determining the legitimacy of the journals.

**References/Resources:**

1. [https://publicationethics.org/files/Principles\\_of\\_Transparency\\_and\\_Best\\_Practice\\_in\\_Scholarly\\_Publishing3.pdf](https://publicationethics.org/files/Principles_of_Transparency_and_Best_Practice_in_Scholarly_Publishing3.pdf) Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publication
2. <https://grants.nih.gov>:
3. <https://predatoryjournals.com>

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