

How to survive in the academic jungle? Protection strategies against predatory journals

Como sobreviver na selva acadêmica?

Estratégias de proteção contra

as revistas predatórias

Clynton Lourenço Correa 

Science can be defined as a complex, self-organizing network that involves ideas, projects and articles.¹ According to the dictionary, science is defined as the gathering of organized knowledge obtained by observation, research or by the demonstration of certain events, facts, and phenomena, being systematized through methods or in a rational way: the rules of the science.² Science is, therefore, the constant pursuit for explanations and/or solutions through studies, reviews and reassessments of results obtained by the researchers. The aim of science is to get closer to the truth through methods that offer control, systematization and reproducibility when compared to non-scientific knowledge.

In the contemporary world, we realize that work processes became more agile compared to previous generations. When it comes to science, we notice that the editorial processes also incorporated technologies that accelerate scientific dissemination. Despite the incorporation of technology in the scientific work process, we cannot assume and accept the absence of the principles that guide good scientific practices, like ethics, responsibility, and scientific integrity.

Scientific integrity can be defined as the practice of science in a prudent, honest, independent, transparent, and responsible manner; the opposite of scientific misconduct is fraud.³ Scientific integrity is an important element of authors and their institutions. Scientific journals are an equally important element in scientific dissemination process. Thus, it is important for authors and research institutions to avoid publishing their results in predatory journals. The term “predatory journal” was defined by Jeffrey Beall when he wrote about the inadequate practices adopted by publishers to explore the open access model in which authors pay for the publication of their scientific articles.⁴ There is no standardized definition of predatory journals and for this reason, some authors may inadvertently submit their manuscripts for this type of journal or consciously may submit their manuscripts to improve productivity and to ascend professionally.⁵ In any case, general characteristics that indicate a journal is predatory include: no peer review process, lack of indexing of the journal in scientific institutions, and publication fee. Obviously, the lack of good editorial practices jeopardizes adequate scientific communication between researchers and between researchers and society.

Recently, researchers have identified six thematic categories to verify if the journal is predatory.⁶ The categories were divided into: 1) Procedures adopted by the journals; 2) Evaluation of previously published articles in the journal; 3) Editorial process and peer review; 4) Communication between the journal and the authors; 5) Manuscript publication rate; and 6) Dissemination, indexing and archiving of manuscripts.⁶ In general, a characteristic that a journal is predatory is the type of communication with the authors. Many of the predatory journals establish their first contact by e-mail inviting the authors to submit articles to the journal. These journals adopt inappropriate practices, such as false information regarding the indexing of bibliographic databases and the affiliation of the journal's editor and members of the editorial board. In addition, predatory journals charge an Article Processing Charges (APC) without any editorial process.⁷ Many scientific journals ask for APC to make articles freely available. This is an acceptable practice provided that there are editorial screening and assessment process in peer-reviewed journals. Unfortunately, there are still no legal measures to prevent authors from being easy prey for these predators in the academic jungle. For the authors survival, being careful with the journal's selection process for the manuscript's submission is highly recommended.

References

1. Fortunato S, Bergstrom CT, Börner K, Evans JA, Helbing D, Milojević S, et al. Science of science. *Science*. 2018;359(6379):eaao0185. DOI
2. Dicionário Online de Português. Ciência [cited 2022 Apr 5] Available from: <https://www.dicio.com.br/ciencia>
3. Canuto SRA, Otta E, Magalhães APT, Albuquerque HBV, Onuchic LF, et al. Guia de boas práticas científicas. São Paulo: PRPUSP; 2019. [Full text link](#)
4. Beall J. Predatory publishers are corrupting open access. *Nature*. 2012;489:179. DOI
5. Cobey KD, Lalu MM, Skidmore B, Ahmadzai N, Grudniewicz A, Moher D. What is a predatory journal? A scoping review. *F1000Res*. 2018;7:1001. DOI
6. Cukier S, Helal L, Rice DB, Pupkaite J, Ahmadzai N, Wilson M, et al. Checklists to detect potential predatory biomedical journals: a systematic review. *BMC Med*. 2020;18(1):104. DOI
7. Shamim T. Polite invitation to submit article: Predatory journal's new strategy. *Saudi J Anaesth*. 2019;13(3):281. DOI

Clynton Lourenço Corrêa is Associate Professor based at Faculty of Physical Therapy and Graduate Program of Physical Education from Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

Correspondence: clyntoncorrea@medicina.ufrj.br