

Title:

Quick and Easy Peer Review Processes: Too Good To Be True, Avoid Predatory Journal Traps

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Professional Practice

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Keywords:

Peer review, predatory journals and publishing (or nursing literature)

References:

Ali, P. A., & Watson, R. (2016). Peer review and the publication process. *Nursing Open*, 3(4), 193-202. doi:10.1002/nop2.51

Oermann, M. H., Conklin, J. L., Nicoll, L. H., Chinn, P. L., Ashton, K. S., Edie, A. H., . . . Budinger, S. C. (2016). Study of predatory open access nursing journals. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 48(6), 624-632. doi:10.1111/jnu.12248

Wicherts, J. M. (2016). Peer review quality and transparency of the peer-review process in open access and subscription journals. *PLoS One*, 11(1), e0147913. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0147913

Abstract Summary:

The purpose of this study was to examine the legitimacy of the peer review process as described in the publishing guidelines in predatory nursing journals. We will highlight the red flags of predatory journals that promote quick peer review for speedy publication that trap unsuspecting authors.

Learning Activity:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE
The learner will be able to characterize the peer review processes of predatory nursing journals in order to be able to identify whether a journal is predatory or not.	1. Define attributes of predatory journals. 2. Describe peer review process in traditional journals. 3. Outline methods of the study.
The learner will differentiate between a legitimate peer review process and an illegitimate one in order to avoid publishing in a low quality journal.	1. Characteristics found in peer review processes of predatory journals. 2. Highlights of red flags for future authors.

Abstract Text:

Abstract

Scholarly nursing journals provide clinicians, educators, and researchers with current evidence-based practice guidelines, innovations in education and patient care, and findings from research that promote the science and practice of the nursing profession. To assure that manuscripts are appropriate, advance the profession, and meet rigorous methodological standards, mechanisms must be in place to critique the quality of the work (Ali & Watson, 2016). The peer review process assists in establishing the quality of the research methods, accuracy and timeliness of the content, relevance of the manuscript to the mission of the journal, and value of its contents to readers. Peer review also provides authors with feedback for revision, which improves the quality of the final submission. The nursing literature, similar to other fields, has experienced the growth of predatory journals with questionable peer review and publishing practices. The purpose of this study was to examine the legitimacy of the peer review process as described in the publishing guidelines in predatory nursing journals

In a previous study of predatory publishing, the authors identified 140 predatory nursing journals (Oermann, et al., 2016). Members of the research team reviewed each of the journal websites to determine if the peer review process was described on the web site. About two-thirds ($n = 94$, 67.1%) of the journals predatory journals indicated that submitted manuscripts were peer reviewed and many of the journal websites ($n=66$, 71.7%) included a description of the peer review process (Oermann, 2016). In this follow up study, the authors examined more closely the 66 journals identified as having peer review processes. These processes were compared with those found in established traditional journals.

The processes for more than half of the predatory nursing journals (54.8%) were not consistent with publishing standards. For example, some peer review descriptions included multiple grammatical errors or odd language, such as describing the process as "advices to perk up their work." Peer reviews offered "10 days for submitting your valuable comments." Others do not allow revisions and state, corrections / edited manuscripts will not be disclosed to the manuscript authors for want of time. That is, Galley Proofs will not be sent to the Primary/Communicating author." The type of peer review, open or closed, single or double blind were most often not indicated. Some did have elaborate diagrams of the peer processes, but did not seem to follow them. Manuscript submissions were through email and did not use the more common online blind submission programs. The processes were "quick and easy."

Critics of peer review call for improvements in the process for authors. The secretiveness of reviews and the length of time to publishing may be barriers to manuscript submissions (Ali & Watson, 2016). In this climate, it is possible to see what attracts authors to these predatory publishers. However, the transparency and quality of the process needs to be upheld. Wicherts (2016) found a positive association between the quality of journals and the transparency of their peer review processes, where predatory journals were the least transparent. While our previous study indicated that the majority of predatory nursing journals described their peer review processes, this study identified the characteristics that make these processes less acceptable than a traditional journal. We will be highlighting red flags for future authors to beware of when selecting a target journal for publication. This will enable authors to sidestep the trap of publishing in predatory journals that tend to promote quick peer review for speedy publication and then forgo a rigorous peer review process.