



Predatory Publishing: A Growing Threat to HIV Nursing?

Michael V. Relf, PhD, RN, AACRN, ACNS-BC, CNE, FAAN*
Barbara Swanson, PhD, RN, ACRN, FAAN

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Over the last 36 years, nurses have seen tremendous scientific advances that have transformed HIV infection from a fatal disease to a chronic, manageable condition. Now that our patients are living longer, HIV nurses have focused their attention on generating, translating, and disseminating scientifically sound knowledge that will improve patient quality of life and self-management skills; however, HIV nursing science, as well as all scientific domains, is being threatened by the continuing surge of predatory publishing.

On a daily basis, how many e-mails do you get from a journal inviting you to submit a manuscript? Are these e-mails aggressive in nature? Do you regularly receive invitations to serve on the editorial board of a new journal? All of these are hallmarks of predatory publishing—a deceptive business model that charges authors excessive fees to publish in journals that do not adhere to accepted standards of peer review or publication ethics (Butler, 2013). It has been estimated that 420,000 scientific articles were published in predatory journals in 2014 (Shen & Björk, 2015). In 2016, at least 140 predatory nursing journals from 75 different publishers were in operation (Oermann et al., 2016).

Unfortunately, there is great confusion between open-access journals and predatory publishing. To accelerate the dissemination of science and to decrease the time from acceptance to publication, many journals use the open-access structure. For example, open-access journals published by Elsevier (the publisher of *JANAC*) undergo peer review, are

immediately available for free download once published, permit re-use defined by the author's choice of Creative Commons user licenses, and are published with CrossMark® (Crossref, Lynnfield, MA) to maintain the publication record (<https://www.elsevier.com/about/open-science/open-access/open-access-journals>; <https://www.elsevier.com/about/company-information/policies/crossmark>). A legitimate fee paid either by the author or an institution covers the costs associated with publication. In contrast, predatory publishers and journals have taken advantage of this system by charging publication fees without providing editorial and publication services, such as peer review and quality control.

Whether a clinician, academic, or scientist, nurses depend upon peer-reviewed, scientifically sound literature to inform their work; however, journals from predatory publishers frequently have “loose reviews” (Harvey & Weinstein, 2017, p. 150), lack transparency in the peer-review process (Wichert, 2016), cannot always guarantee rigorous methods and/or accurate content (Oermann et al., 2016), frequently do not have an impact factor

*Michael V. Relf, PhD, RN, AACRN, ACNS-BC, CNE, FAAN, is an Associate Editor for JANAC and is the Associate Dean for Global and Community Affairs and Associate Professor, Duke University School of Nursing, Durham, North Carolina, USA. (*Correspondence to: michael.relf@dm.duke.edu; michael.relf@duke.edu). Barbara Swanson, PhD, RN, ACRN, FAAN, is an Associate Editor for JANAC and is a Professor and Director of the PhD in Nursing Science Program, Rush University College of Nursing, Chicago, Illinois, USA.*

(Van Nuland & Rogers, 2016), and are transient in nature, resulting in vanished articles and lost archives (Beall, 2016).

Not unlike higher-order organisms, predatory publishers have evolved to survive threats to their existence. They have created professional-appearing Web sites. Their journals have titles that are startlingly similar to the titles of established and legitimate journals, they display ISSN numbers, and they assign DOIs to articles. These practices can deceive authors who want to publish work in open-access journals, or hybrid journals such as *JANAC*, that adhere to established publication and peer-review standards. Until recently, authors could assess the legitimacy of open-access journals by consulting Beall's List, an online listing of predatory journals. For reasons that remain unclear, Beall's List was taken down in January of 2017 (Chawla, 2017).

In the absence of Beall's List, authors must seek other sources to distinguish legitimate publishers from those that are predatory. One source is <http://thinkchecksubmit.org>. This Web site, maintained by a group of publishing industry representatives, helps authors find legitimate publishers through an easy-to-navigate checklist with pertinent links. For example, an author could use the checklist to determine if a journal is published in the Directory of Open Access Journals or if its publisher follows the guidelines of the Committee on Publication Ethics, each of which helps to establish journal legitimacy.

A journal's Web site contains valuable information regarding its legitimacy. Does the publisher provide verifiable contact information that includes telephone numbers and mailing and e-mail addresses? Is there a publication fee and is the amount clearly stated on the journal's Web site? Is the journal indexed in reliable databases, such as PubMed® and Scopus®, or listed in the directory of reputable nursing journals maintained by the International Academy of Nurse Editors (available at <https://nursingeditors.com/journals-directory/>)? Authors are also advised to review recent issues of open-access journals to assess articles for quality and scientific rigor before submitting a paper.

Authors should consult with reference librarians to help navigate the increasingly treacherous publishing waters. Librarians can help authors disentangle the mistakenly conflated concepts of open-access publishing and predatory publishing. Not all

open-access publishers are predatory; nor are all predatory service providers publishers, as predatory editors, translation services, and conferences are beginning to appear. Librarians are also skilled at assessing journal quality and are knowledgeable about current lists of predatory journals. Recently, librarians at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan, developed and published a rubric of quality indicators to distinguish legitimate and predatory publishers (Beaubien & Eckard, 2014). Indeed, most of the work to keep the public informed about predatory publishing has come from librarians.

Unfortunately, colleges, universities, and academics unwittingly sustain predatory publishers. In today's academic world, promotion and tenure are coupled with publication, so it is not surprising that faculty are lured by the promise of quick and easy publishing. In response, promotion and tenure committees should deemphasize quantity of publications and focus on quality (Harvey & Weinstein, 2017). These committees should also review publication lists carefully to determine the presence of predatory publications. Further, academic settings must work to raise awareness of predatory publishing so that faculty, especially junior faculty, are not the victims of predatory publishers.

While predatory publishers reflect the worst in publishing practices, there may be a silver lining to their accelerated growth. Their presence may inspire the still nascent open-access publishing industry to implement transparent quality controls to separate legitimate from predatory publishers. They may also compel academia to recognize and value honest publishers who adhere to industry standards (Beall, 2013).

Disclosures

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