LETTERS

Caution: Predatory Journals Want Your Business!

To the editor: AANA Journal readers and potential authors beware: predatory open-access journals are proliferating in the health sciences. Profit, rather than dissemination of peer-reviewed scholarly activity, is the singular goal of these journals. Masquerading as scholarly publications, they operate with an absence of transparency. They often are managed by a publisher (a single individual or group) who manages multiple specialty journals, provide a deceptive business location (often Pakistan, India or Nigeria), claim rigorous peer-review when none exists, list editorial board membership often without the members’ knowledge or permission, and provide an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) that applies to a selected journal and not a publisher.

These journals have grand alluring titles in an attempt to legitimate scholarly activity, soliciting manuscripts via phishing e-mail invitations. I have received several of these solicitations, as have many of my colleagues that I’ve informally surveyed. These are immediately suspicious, appearing unprofessional, and often with grammatical and spelling errors. Unsuspecting authors submit their manuscripts in the hope of being published. With submission, the author is asked to sign over copyright to the journal. Following a bogus peer-review process that takes as little as one week (unheard of for legitimate refereed journals), the author is rewarded with acceptance for publication via e-mail. The journal then exploits the author requiring an “article processing charge” (APC) to publish the submitted manuscript. These journals corrupt the dissemination of scholarly activity, polluting the extant literature with “junk science.” In one case, an unsuspecting author who submitted to a predatory journal was asked for an APC of $3,000. Upon determining the journal was not legitimate, the author requested the manuscript be withdrawn. This was followed by a demand of the original APC charge to withdraw the manuscript.1

Since 2009 Dr Jeffrey Beall, a librarian at the University of Colorado, has tracked predatory publishers. He developed Scholarly Open Access (www.scholarlyoa.com) where authors can find criteria for determining the legitimacy of a journal. This site also catalogs and provides updates of suspected predatory journal publishers and provides a directory of quality open-access journals (http://doaj.org).

The lesson here for all of us is clear: be cautious when shopping online for a journal or a publisher. This axiom is relevant whether you are looking to buy a car, find a mortgage company, or selecting a pediatrician for your child. Investing a little time into finding a quality home for that manuscript is essential. To quote Dr Beall, “examine the company you are about to deal with.”

REFERENCES

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DISCLOSURES
The author has declared no financial relationship with any commercial interest related to the content of this letter. The author did not discuss off-label use within the letter.