

# Predatory versus Non-Predatory Journals: An Important Distinction to be Made

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## Abstract

The concerns of a journal being designated as “predatory” are raised, discussing the varied evidence for such categorization. Other related issues are discussed, such as the Article Publication Cost, and the indexing of the published manuscript in various databases. The specific characteristics of predatory behavior is described for the professional reader to judge the merits of any particular journal.

**Keywords:** Predatory journals, Professional integrity, Publication ethics

## Editorial

The term, “predatory”, is defined in Webster’s dictionary as “inclined or intended to injure or exploit others for personal gain”. This term was first applied to some journals by Professor Beall in 2012, describing those journals as being without scholarly merit and being exploitative for a journal’s gain [1]. The described now updated list includes over 1500 journals, which emphasizes its current scope. Predatory journals, which favor commercial revenue-generating activity in the form of an Article Publishing Charge (APC) over scholarly function, harm our collective publication industry. Make no mistake, for online journals which do not have the advertising or academic institutional support for funding their publication expenses, APCs are a requirement. However, if a journal notifies upfront what those APCs are, provides qualified peer-review to ensure excellence of the published articles, are part of a reputable publishing group, and do not systematically solicit contributions from authors with intrusive emails, such journals cannot be labeled as predatory.

Much has been written about this phenomenon in the publication industry, speaking to its definition and how such practice can be avoided [2]. The identification of predatory journals can be done by using checklists [3], for instance, and offering a list of specific qualifications that might be applied

so as to measure the level of predation [4]. Additional relevant issues have been discussed, such as open access that many journals offer [5], the issue of copyright access [6], and the concern of database indexing [7]. Another related predatory behavior relates to professional conferences [8], and the rebranding which is occurring as a result of the recognition of predatory practice [9].

Regarding the use of the APC and the potential cost of publication borne by the author and/or sponsoring organization, an important concern should be noted. Many medical institutions (i.e. hospitals) provide an educational function, supporting independent residency/fellowship programs in a variety of specialties and sub-specialties, and therefore rely upon the formal accreditation provided by the American Council of Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). Since these institutions generally need to comply with the requirement to have faculty and residents maintain their scholarship with publications in journals, many such organizations willingly pay for the APCs that are sometimes requested of authors. It is quite possible, therefore, that many more medical journals will begin to require an APC, because of the availability of this funding and the requirement of scholarship represented by publication which is necessary to maintain ACGME sponsorship.

The quality of a journal can be judged for its transparent conduct, the Impact Factor (IF) that it may have, the reputation of the publishing group that it is a part of, the use of an Editorial management software, identification of the database in which it is indexed (e.g. PubMed), and the general quality and scope of the manuscripts that it publishes. Though journals may differ in their overall quality, it is important to distinguish a *predatory* journal, from one which is *not* predatory, and which indeed has all of the positive features mentioned above.

Publishing standards certainly should be maintained in order for our collective medical knowledge and practice to properly advance. *Archives of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* offers a place for publishing articles worthy of reading in this medical specialty.

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