



Predatory Journals in Dermatology: A Hidden Danger

Guy SHALOM^{1,2}

¹Clalit Health Services, Tel Aviv, ²Siaal Research Center for Family Medicine and Primary Care, Faculty of Health Sciences, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel. E-mail: guyshal@post.bgu.ac.il

This issue of ActaDV includes a study that uncovers worrisome findings about predatory journals and their impact on patients (1). Richtig and colleagues performed a prospective survey of a group of 286 Austrian dermatologists regarding their knowledge and daily interface with predatory journals. Less than 30% of participants had prior knowledge of predatory journals and almost 90% did not know how to identify such journals. On the other hand, more than 40% of participating dermatologists had been shown scientific literature by their patients, and due to lack of knowledge, more than 60% could not determine whether it came from predatory journals.

Predatory journals are an increasing problem that affects all clinicians in daily practice and research. Maddy & Tosti (2) identified 76 predatory journals in the field of dermatology out of 1,058 predatory journals in Baell's list, as of July 2016. Scientifically speaking, these journals constitute a significant hazard as they do not provide a thorough peer-review, they are exposed to a bias of hidden potential conflicts of interest and many other professional issues. Predatory journals are therefore strongly unreliable and highly controversial. On the other hand, they are easily available online, with free-of-charge open-access, which makes them highly reachable for our patients. Consequently, as Richtig and colleagues demonstrate, predatory journals increasingly affect patients' decisions and judgement in a disturbing manner. Predatory journals therefore pose a serious, but rather hidden, danger to the scientific community and its image. The current study highlights this lack of knowledge for the first time.

It has been suggested that all journals should spread the word about predatory journals, and investigators have urged boycotting any journal with predatory practices (3, 4). Shahriari et al. (5) proposed that Clark's 5-points to be used as a guideline to identify predatory journals. These guidelines, as well as Beall's criteria (6), should be used when faced with a questionable journal.

Academic institutions, leading journals, dermatology departments and senior academics should be aware of these unethical journals, warn new eager scientists who are trying to distribute their studies, and support the research community by creating true reachable alternatives. Training for medical students and young residents should continuously include education on how to recognize predatory practices. The present study by Richtig and colleagues (1) takes exactly that line.

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