

## Publish or perish: A sign of caution for authors to avoid predatory journals

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Madam, the rapid rise in the number of predatory journals and invitations to submit are more than a nuisance to the researchers.<sup>1,2</sup> And, this problem can be further escalated by the sudden disappearance of Beall's blog resulting in a major damage to the scientific publishing, and putting young and naive researchers particularly from the developing countries at risk.<sup>3</sup> I was recently requested to offer help on an issue concerning predatory journals. Unfortunately, senior and experienced researchers from a developing country were the victims in this case. They had submitted their paper to the International Research Journal of Applied and Basic Sciences (IRJABS) (<http://www.irjabs.com/en/>) in August 2015, but due to no response from the journal's editorial office even after several trials of correspondence, the paper was withdrawn by the authors on September 22, 2015. However, as usual, the authors did not receive any response from the journal and presumably submitted the manuscript to a legitimate outlet for publication in May, 2016, which after undergoing revisions, was published in February, 2017. Recently, it came to the authors' knowledge that the paper they had withdrawn from the IRJABS was published in the first issue of Scinzer Journal of Medical ([http://www.scinzer.com/J/Scinzer\\_Journal\\_of\\_Medical/Default](http://www.scinzer.com/J/Scinzer_Journal_of_Medical/Default)) of 2015. I was able to provide a valuable input to the authors when approached by them. It is important to mention that the IRJABS and the Scinzer Journal of Medical are published by the Science Explorer Publications and the Scinzer Scientific Publications respectively, both of which are predatory publishers.<sup>4</sup> The authors sent an email to the Scinzer Journal of Medical asking them to remove their paper with a threat of taking legal action, and the paper was ultimately taken down from the website of Scinzer Journal of Medical. This was a sensible move by the authors as the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) has suggested the same to be done.<sup>5</sup> The authors were fortunate enough to save their reputation and of course, their paper from facing a retraction from the legitimate journal but there are certainly, some questions raised from this case. Firstly,

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how a paper that was submitted to a journal got published in another journal having a different publisher? It is more likely that the owner or party behind the two publishers may be the same and trying this novel deceptive technique. Secondly, what could have been done to avoid this menace to happen? I understand that the authors were keen to publish, wrong selection of a journal without knowing its authenticity can result in losing the article, and it can result in waste of time and a futile outcome than that of publishing in a legitimate journal. It can also put a question mark on the reputation of the authors. A sensible and sound journal selection prior to submission of the work would in most of the cases, if not all, be contributive in avoiding this mishap. This case is a learning experience particularly for the early-career and developing country researchers. I suggest the authors from the developing world that they should confirm, prior to the submission of their work, the legitimacy of the journal and its publisher. They should seek help from their senior colleagues and those with expertise in journal selection.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, to obtain a blacklist of dubious journals and publishers, the archived copies of Beall' lists may be useful.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, the whitelists can be obtained from PubMed/MEDLINE ([https://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/serfile\\_addedinfo.html](https://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/serfile_addedinfo.html) or <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/labs/journals/> or <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/nlmcatalog/journals/>), Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) (<https://doaj.org/search>), Master Journal List of Clarivate Analytics (<http://ip-science.thomsonreuters.com/mjl/>), and Publons ([https://publons.com/journal/?order\\_by=reviews](https://publons.com/journal/?order_by=reviews)). Additionally, Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA) (<http://oaspa.org/membership/members/>), Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) ([http://publicationethics.org/members/journals/?f\[0\]=bundle%3Ajournal](http://publicationethics.org/members/journals/?f[0]=bundle%3Ajournal)), International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) (<http://www.icmje.org/journals-following-the-icmje-recommendations/>), and International Association of STM Publishers (<http://www.stm-assoc.org/membership/our-members/>) may also be useful in providing the list of legitimate journals or publishers. To find a journal with an impact factor, Journal Citation Reports (JCR) may be useful and it can be easily obtained by typing "Journal Citation Reports [the required year] PDF" in Google. Likewise, a quick guide for journal selection

process is the Think. Check. Submit. Campaign (<http://www.thinkchecksubmit.org/>). To conclude, a sensible decision in journal selection may lead to publication of the paper in a legitimate and more reliable outlet whereas a rushed and blunt move may cause authors getting victimized by the fraudulent journals and publishers; so, it is advisable that they ought to be careful while submitting their work for publication and should learn from the recent experience presented in this paper.

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