**Review of invitations to publish in predatory scientific journals**

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# Abstract

**BACKGROUND**: Predatory scientific journals subvert the usual quality control processes employed by reputable journals for financial gain and they accept almost anything. Very little has been published about what the invitations to publish contain.

**METHODS**: Narrative review primarily based on the invitations to publish I received in March 2023.

**RESULTS**: I receive about 20 invitations per week to publish and two to predatory conferences. Most invitations were written in very poor English. As the senders had English sounding names, they were likely fake. The impact factors also seemed to be fake for the so-called Austin journals, which are not owned by a company in Texas but in India. The invitations were full of flattery; there was a sense of urgency; most often I was invited to attach my paper to the email with no author instructions; and sometimes publication was assured. The journals were often totally irrelevant for my research, e.g. *American Journal of Planetary and Space Science* and *Global Journal of Plant and Soil Sciences*. As other examples, *Journal of Clinical Microbiology and Antimicrobials* wanted to publish my preprint about methods for withdrawing depression drugs, and *Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences & Emerging Drugs* wanted to publish the preprint of the current paper about predatory journals.

**CONCLUSIONS**: The business model of predatory scientific journals constitutes consumer fraud as it deceives many people who buy into something they do not get. We should write much more about predatory journals and conferences; maintain websites about them; and scrutinize the journals in applications for funding or jobs if we do not recognize them.

# Introduction

Ethical publishing in scientific journals involves careful attention to peer review, quality checks, editing, accountability, transparency, and archiving for the historical record.1

Predatory scientific journals subvert these processes for financial gain. The term was coined by Jeffrey Beall at the University of Colorado2 who maintained a “Beall’s list” of likely offenders, which he took down after threats of lawsuits,3 e.g. from the OMICS Publishing Group based in India.4 There are now other such lists.3,4

In the early 2000s, the subscription model for medi-cal journals was supplemented with an open-access model where the authors pay for publication.5 This was a great advance for science but also created what has been called an age of academic racketeering.2 Beall estimated that the number of predatory publishers rose from 18 in 2011 to nearly 700 in 2015.2 By 2014, there were already about 8000 active predatory journals, and over 400,000 articles had been published.6

The recipe is pay and publish whatever you like, with little or no peer review,4 no quality control, no transparency about processes and fees, aggressive solicitation of contributors irrespective of relevant expertise, and sometimes closely mimicking names of reputable journals.2,7-9 Reputable journals have been hijacked by predators that abuse their established names and identities and use fake websites that mimic the authentic one.9,10 A hijacked journal website is typified by an unusually high number of published papers, in some cases 1500 per issue.10

The text in email invitations is often written in very poor English.11-13 One study found grammatical or punctuation errors in 59% of 502 invitations.13 There are rarely any author instructions, and the recipient is usually asked to send a manuscript by email.14

Author instructions on the websites of 12 biomedical predatory publishers, with a total of 1122 journals, were very similar, as if they had been copied and pasted.14 None of them mentioned authorship criteria, consent forms, ethics committee approval, consent from patients, or plagiarism, or identified a person as the editor-in-chief. The publishers mentioned that "submitted article will send to review process and review repot will send for authors if needed any modification or change" (sic).

Editorial board members may be fake,15 and predatory journals may add researchers' names and university affiliations to their editorial boards without the permission or knowledge of the researchers.5 When they find this out and ask to have their name removed, the publishers generally do not respond.14,16 The involuntary board members may be recycled; in one case the same person was listed in 69 journals.14 Even named editors-in-chief can be fake.17

The predators often present false claims about impact factors7,9,13 and about being indexed, e.g. in PubMed.2,18 Furthermore, they often hide their business locations or use virtual office companies to make it appear as if they are based in the USA or in the UK,9 but many of the publishers are in low and middle income countries, particularly India, Pakistan, and Nigeria.2,5 Sometimes, the location of the publisher, whether true or false, is not stated on the publisher’s homepage.14

Overly flattering language is common.9,11,12,15 Invitations often start with a special greeting and the recipient may be called “excellent,” “eminent,” or “prominent,” and may be praised for previously published work, even such the recipient never carried out.9

Emails from predatory journals often come with a sense of urgency with an assurance of a rapid turnaround time, a discount if the manuscript is published in the next issue, and sometimes even an assurance of publication.18 Discrepancies in article processing charges between publisher websites and journal websites are also seen.14

Journal websites for 25 of 85 journals noted that there was a charge for withdrawal of a manuscript at any stage after submission, and 35 of the journals had different publication fees based on the nature or length of the manuscript, nationality of the authors, or number of authors.18

Discrepancies in the information provided in the email and on the webpage, or within the webpage, occurred in 81 journals (95%). Email invitations rarely mention that there are any charges.9

This is also the case for invitations to speak at predatory conferences. People invited to talk because of their “eminence” in the field may be required to pay US$699 for listening to themselves.9 The advertising can include claims of involvement of prominent academics who are, in fact, uninvolved,17,19 and sometimes the conferences don’t exist; the fraudsters just collect the money.20 OMICS never grant refunds for registration fees, even if they themselves cancel or postpone the conference.19 And if people register and then realise they sought a different conference with the same or a similar name, a refund is not possible.

As there are virtually no verbatim descriptions in the literature of what invitations look like, I studied this.

# Methods

I did a narrative review based on the invitations to publish a paper that arrived in my inbox (or in my spam box because I had blocked the senders) in March 2023. I supplemented this with a scan of invitations received earlier or later to identify those that illustrated an interesting issue not covered by the other invitations.

# Results

Very few invitations mentioned any of my publications and those that did mostly quoted one of my preprints. I have only published two preprints as first author, a systematic review from March 2023 about interven-tions to help patients withdraw from depression drugs,21 and another systematic review in December 2022 about serious harms of the COVID-19 vaccines.22

***Invitations quoting our review about withdrawal from depression drug****s*

A typical invitation came from *[Journal of Clinical Case Reports and Trials](https://www.innovationinfo.org/journal-of-clinical-case-reports-and-trials)* on 13 April 2023. The subject line was, “Your article contribution is highly appreciated,” with the subheading “Importance: high.” “We have gone through your research work … and thrilled to know about your reputation and commitment. We would like to invite you and your colleagues to submit original research, review, mini reviews, case reports and studies, short communications, letters, editorials, etc. to be considered by peer-review for publication ... Authors are requested to submit their papers electronically to [clinicalcase@innovationinfo.online](mailto:clinicalcase@innovationinfo.online). \*\*Publication charges are 599 USD on or before 25 April 2023.”

In this case, the invitation mentioned a publication charge, but this is rare.

*[Journal of Neurological Disorders](https://www.hilarispublisher.com/neurological-disorders.html" \t "_blank)* were “very excited about the forthcoming issue will be released. It is an honour and privilege to invite you to submit your manuscript for this issue … We believe that your contribution to this field is unparalleled and your submission on the topic will be of great benefit. We look forward to a positive confirmation, an honour for us indeed.”

I asked if they charged a publication fee: “Warm greetings! Thank you for showing interest towards our esteemed journal … our journal consists of article processing charges of 2300 euros.”

I responded: “I don't pay to publish,” to which the journal replied: “… as you're the eminent author our Editorial team has decided to provide you with a partial waiver on the processing charges. So, you can pay only 1019 euros for the article processing charges.”

[*International Internal Medicine Journal*](https://www.opastpublishers.com/journal/international-internal-medicine-journal/manuscript-submission) believed that their “invitation is agreeable to you and does not conflict with your work ethics. Give a chance to publish your valuable research in our journal.”

*[Journal of clinical microbiology and antimicrobials](https://www.longdom.org/journal-clinical-microbiology-antimicrobials.html)* (sic; the website uses capital letters) “… must appreciate your article, which is very engrossing and enlightening.” The readers “will be inspired upon reading your article.” Perhaps, but what does withdrawal from depression drugs have to do with microbiology?

*[Stem Cell Research International](https://www.opastpublishers.com/journal/stem-cell-research-international)* wrote that “Your contribution is of great importance to us and it will help the journal to establish its high standards.” If the journal already had high standards, how could I then help establish them? It also escapes me what stem cell research has to do with people wanting to come off depression drugs.

***Invitations quoting our review about serious harms of COVID-19 vaccines***

I received another email with a publication charge of 599 USD, almost identical to the first one, but now it was another journal, *[Journal of Biomedical Research and Reviews](https://www.innovationinfo.org/Journal-of-Biomedical-Research-and-Reviews)*, and also my other reprint. Unsurprisingly, the publisher was the same.

*[International Journal of Clinical Case Reports and Reviews](https://www.auctoresonline.org/journals/international-journal-of-clinical-case-reports-and-reviews)* not only asked for my preprint but also wanted me to become an editorial board member, which was a very common request.

*[Journal of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Cancer Research](http://jogcr.com/" \t "_blank)* wrote: “Very Good day. We have gone through your … Pre-print … and found very interesting and Informative. We would like to know your time and Interest in submitting your Preprint article.”

One journal lauded themselves: “With immense pride, I would like to introduce the *[International Journal of Clinical and Medical Education Research](https://www.opastpublishers.com/journal/international-journal-of-clinical-and-medical-education-research)* … we are really impressed with your work and it will be really appreciating if could publish this article in our journal.”

*[Journal of Vascular Medicine & Surgery](https://www.walshmedicalmedia.com/vascular-medicine-surgery.html)* were “delighted to invite” me with a “30% discount on the Actual processing charges.” Due to the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic, all reputable journals have waivered their publication fees for open access related to this, but predatory journals are only focused on money.

*[Global Journal of Biology, Agriculture & Health Sciences](https://www.walshmedicalmedia.com/global-journal-biology-agriculture-health-sciences.html)* offered a 50% discount for an immediate submission. They were “delighted rummaging your Preprint …, is extremely riveting and enlightening. We tend to appreciate your tremendous analysis and effort. Thus, it would be our extreme pleasure to invite you to submit your full-length manuscript to our prestigious journal.”

*[American Journal of Planetary and Space Science](https://www.pubtexto.com/journals/american-journal-of-planetary-and-space-science)* was “enthralled to know about your reputation and commitment … The journal welcomes all aspects of investigation of the solar system and other planetary system.” I occasionally look at the stars but I don’t even possess a telescope.

***Invitations quoting other research***

*[Global Journal of Plant and Soil Sciences](https://www.internationalscholarsjournals.com/global-journal-plant-soil-sciences/about.html)* (or *Soil Science*; both terms were used) quoted a paper we had published about protocols for randomised clinical trials,23 and wrote: “We are pleased to acknowledge gratitude on behalf of scientific community for contributing distinctive research ideaologies through fastest Open Acess route ... Your article is well written and easy to understand, arguments are insightful. It provides relevant and valuable information which helps in providing direction towards novel research ... We wonder it would be great if you could write Short commentary / Mini-review for the success of our upcoming issue.”

*[Anesthesia and Critical Care](https://www.fortunejournals.com/anesthesia-and-critical-care-home-facc.php)* cordially invited me to submit our preprint of a review of systematic violations of the rights of psychiatric patients in Alaska24 for “a fast track peer review process (within 7-9 working days) followed by publication in the journal.”

Another journal that wanted our review from Alaska also guaranteed publication: “Greetings from [*Journal of Blood & Lymph*](https://www.hilarispublisher.com/blood-lymph.html) Hope this mail finds you in good health ... Could you submit your preprint manuscript to us? We will publish it in our journal followed by rapid peer review process.” So, they publish first and do peer review later.

[*Journal of Psychiatry and Behaviour Therapy*](https://norcaloa.com/pybt) were “truly obliged” to introduce themselves and quoted me for a paper I have never heard about, “Polygenic risk score-based phenome-wide association study identifies novel associations for Tourette syndrome.” My name doesn’t appear anywhere in the paper.

***Invitations not quoting my research***

[*International Journal of Recent Scientific Research*](https://www.recentscientific.com/) informed me in December 2022 that they welcomed the submission of scientific articles in all scientific fields for November 2022. I accept that it might be possible to travel backward in time through a wormhole if you enter it through a spherical opening, at least mathematically, but hardly in practice.

*[Journal of Case Reports and Medical History](https://www.acquirepublications.org/Journal/CaseReports/Case-Reports-and-Medical-History)* wrote: “Your work is gladly invited for publication in the future edition … we are able to accept any unpublished manuscripts from you ... We cordially anticipate our long-term scientific endeavour.”

*[Journal of Urology and Renal Diseases](https://www.gavinpublishers.com/journals/details/journal-of-urology-and-renal-diseases-issn-2575-7903)* looked “forward for a long and productive relationship with you… We have gone through your recent publications and have found them interesting and are of Superior Quality.”

“Journal of [*Diversity & Equality in Health and Care*](https://www.primescholars.com/diversity-and-equality-in-health-and-care.html) finds you in sound health ... Our Editorial board has gone through your recent Preprint article [none quoted] and found it informative and influential amongst the scientific community ... Warm regards.”

*[Clinical and Experimental Dermatology and Therapies](https://www.gavinpublishers.com/journals/details/clinical-and-experimental-dermatology-and-therapies-issn-2575-8268)* offered a 40% discount if I submitted a paper within a week but did not state any amount: “Dear Doctor, Hope you are having a great day! We would like to take the pleasure of inviting you to publish your interesting works … It will be a great honor for us and an excellent opportunity for you to share your latest scientific work on the field of Dermatology in our international scientific review.”

*[International Journal of Orthopedics and Rehabilitation](http://savvysciepb.com/joomla310/index.php?option=com_acymailing&ctrl=url&subid=77742&urlid=18&mailid=44)* had looked up my name “as a potential contributor in the field” (I have never published anything in an orthopaedic journal): “It gives me immense pleasure to invite you to join board member team of the journal ... we are sure your induction will uplift the journal and it will get more visibility and get more recognition in scientific community.”

*[Journal of Orthopedics & Bone Disorders](https://medwinpublishers.com/JOBD/)* apologized for bothering me in my busy schedule, but “It would be our pleasure to invite you to submit a manuscript towards [the journal] … Hope you will definitely accept this invitation without denying it ... Await to receive your prompt response ... You may always remember how much you are needed, respected and valued..!!”

*[Obstetrics and Gynecology: Open Access](https://www.gavinpublishers.com/journals/details/obstetrics-gynecology-open-access-issn-2577-2236)* hoped I was “doing great” and wrote: “Our review process runs quickly, your manuscript will be published within 12 days from the date of submission.” Apparently, no peer review obstacles here.

*[Journal of Marketing & Supply Chain Management](https://www.onlinescientificresearch.com/journal-of-marketing-supply-chain-management-home-jmscm.php)* “would like to invite you to write a Research Article, Review Articles, Case Reports, Video Articles & Power Point Presentations (PPTs) and based on your research interest, which would be published in the upcoming issue.”

Perhaps I could even publish my 55 year-old school essays?

***Special case: Medires Publishers***

Journals from this publisher, which is based in India, carpet bombed me. On 16 March 2023, I received six emails from the same person and journal, *[Hospital and Clinical Management](https://mediresonline.org/journals/hospital-and-clinical-management)*, which were identical, apart from the publication I was quoted for. The flattery was: “I appreciate your professionalism and knowledge after a view at your article.”

The text was often identical also for different journals and people. These emails came in batches. I received seven on 22 September 2022 and none until 6 December 2022 when I received six. All senders, e.g. publisher@hematologymediresonline.com, had “mediresonline” in the address, and there was an unsubscribe option that never worked. The journals ignored my many requests to be deleted from their mail lists, and they continued to arrive in my inbox even after I had blocked many of the senders.

In the most recent 10 months, I received 52 emails from 14 Medires journals. They were often messy. [*Journal of Clinical Surgery and Reports*](https://www.mediresonline.org/journals/journal-of-clinical-surgery-and-reports/articles-in-press)had tirzepatide in the subject line, a diabetes drug that causes weight loss at a price of over $12,000 a year, but it quoted my vaccine preprint, which is not related to surgery or diabetes.

Some journal titles were messy, too. [*Journal of Haematology and Disorders*](https://mediresonline.org/journals/hematology-and-disorders/) (which disorders?) was spelled in three different ways in the same email, and [*Emergency and Nursing Management*](https://mediresonline.org/journals/emergency-and-nursing-management), [*Journal of Adolescent and Addiction Research*](https://mediresonline.org/journals/journal-of-adolescent-and-addiction-research/)*,* and[*Journal of Internal Medicine and Health Affairs*](https://mediresonline.org/journals/journal-of-internal-medicine-and-health-affairs)combined widely different themes in their titles. I was greeted by [Psychiatry and Psychological Peter C. GøtzscheDisorders](https://mediresonline.org/journals/psychiatry-and-psychological-disorders)“ as if some psychiatric disorders had been named after me, and there were two more versions of the journal name in the same email.

***Special case: Austin Publishing Group***

This publisher is not located in Texas, as the names implies. It takes some detective work to find out that the company is based in India. The domain austinpublishinggroup.com is registered to [www.crazydomains.com](http://www.crazydomains.com), and to hide the actual registrant, “Crazy Domains” named the registrant as "Domain Administrator."16

The publisher first contacted me on 9 August 2018 under the subject: “Let world knows about your work by publishing an article here.” Other emails had subjects like “In search of valuable research,” “Hunt-ing for Eminent Scholars,” “We will publish your research work,” “Accepting new manuscripts for next edition,” “Globalize your research work,” “Allow us to process your research,” “Now publish your work in open access model without fee,” “Submit Your Manu-script at 200 USD in August” (with a deadline of two weeks).

Someone who felt “obliged” to invite me invited the wrong person: “Dear Dr. Pearson Dharshani.” Others called me G?tzsche and invited me with extreme or immense pleasure.

During the next 3.5 years, I was invited to publish in 40 Austin journals. Occasionally, there was an unsubscribe option, but it didn’t work. As the journals continued to pester me even after I had carefully blocked every sender I saw, I investigated their email addresses. It turned out that they had used 37 different names after the @-sign, many of which differed by only one character:

@austinclinmedjournals.org

@austingroups.co

@austinjounl.co

@austinjournal.co

@austinjournalss.co

@austinjournls.co

@austinjrnls.co

@austinjurnl.co

@austinmedjournal.co

@austinmedjournals.co

@austinmedopenaccess.org

@austinmedresoa.co

@austinoagroup.org

@austinoajournals.biz

@austinoajournals.org

@austinoajournalss.co

@austinoajournl.com

@austinoapublication.co

@austinoapublications.org

@austinoapublish.co

@austinoapublishes.co

@austinopenresearch.co

@austinopnjunl.info

@austinpublish.co

@austinpublisher.co

@austinpublisher.org

@austinpublishers.net

@austinpublishinggroup.com

@austinresearchs.co

@austinsgroup.co

@austinsjrnls.co

@austinsjunl.co

@austinspubjurnl.co

@austinsresearch.co

@oaaustinpublisher.org

@oaaustinpublishers.org

@oaustinpubs.info

What came before the @-sign also varied, even for the same person, e.g.:

Maria Joseph <maria.joseph@austingroups.co>

Maria Joseph <maria@austinoajournalss.co>

Maria Joseph <mariajoseph@austingroups.co>

Maria Joseph <maria-joseph@austinmedjournal.co>

Maria Joseph <mariajoseph@austinsgroup.co>

This makes it a never ending job to assign incoming mails from this publisher as junk.

There was a huge amount of copy and paste in emails from different senders and journals, and they were often written in very poor English even though every single email had a sender with an English sounding name. I therefore suspected the names were fake. Here are some examples:

“Based upon your eminent contributions towards the field … If your research paper is ready and looking towards publication, I am requesting you to consider our journal … It will be a great honor for us.”

“The publication fee has never been the main criteria for publication … our primary focus and emphasis is on publishing quality manuscripts.”

“I am kindly invite you to submit a manuscript.”

“Dear Dr. Peter C Gøtzsche. Dear all Research Scholars and Doctors who have deep concern and awareness of medical sciences.”

“We are focused on publishing quality research articles, in-order to spread the research and development results to the world.”

“We engross in publishing quality articles.”

“We understand your priorities and professional commitments, it would not be appropriate at this point of time to over burden you by asking you to write/ contribute a full length manuscript for this issue.” They then called for “at least a 2 page short Communication.”

“We request you to contribute an article to our jour-nal ... minimum 1 page to the maximum you can and even you can submit a research article/review/case report on any of your interesting topic for the upcoming issue.”

“Based upon your expertise … I strongly believe that your research will help upcoming researchers and enthusiasts in their research work.”

“We have been searching for researchers, scientists and authors who will provide their globally highly valuable research work and valuable suggestions to publish best quality articles in our journal. We have chosen you.”

“We are seeking excellent short articles … where your suggestions for the new researchers are documented.”

“We are in shortfall of articles … Is it possible for you to support us with your Research or mini review for this issue? We are confident that you are always there to support us.”

The editors of a journal that had not published a single article called it “a promising journal success-fully running … If your research is not ready, please contribute at least mini review or short Communi-cation.”

There were often journal impact factors in the mails, and they were remarkably similar: 1.2 (10 cases), 1.4 (1), 1.5 (1), 1.8 (4), 1.9 (7), 2.1 (6), 2.219 (1), 2.4 (1), 2.5 (1), and 2.8 (3). The one with three decimals was from 2018; all the others were more recent. The Thomson Scientific Database provides three decimals for the impact factors, but not a single one of all the 40 journals from the Austin Publishing Group that invited me to publish is listed in this database. This fact, and the extremely unlikely distribution of impact factors strongly suggest that the impact factors are fake.

***Predatory journal “invites” me to submit my preprint manuscript about invitations to publish in predatory journals***

I had expected it to happen but was a bit surprised when it did happen. This is the email I received, from *Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences & Emerging Drugs* inviting me to publish my preprint article about predatory journals. This journal is published by the Omics group based in India, a well-known predatory publisher that I mentioned above.

**From: Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences & Emerging Drugs <**[editor.jpsed@scitechnol.com](mailto:editor.jpsed@scitechnol.com)**>  
Sent: Friday, June 2, 2023 1:43 PM  
To:** pcg@scientificfreedom.dk  
**Subject:** Review of invitations to publish in predatory scientific journals  
**Importance:** High

**Dear Dr. Peter C Gøtzsche,**  
Greetings from [**Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences & Emerging Drugs**](https://www.scitechnol.com/pharmaceutical-sciences-emerging-drugs.php)

We have gone through your unpublished work entitled **“Review of invitations to publish in predatory scientific journals”** and enthralled to know about your reputation and commitment.

We strongly believe that this potential research would be beneficial to the people working in the field of **Pharmaceutical Sciences.**

Hereby we request you to kindly submit your manuscript to get published in our journal. We assure you that it reaches several global medical readers.

You can submit your manuscript as an attachment to this **e-mail**or directly through Journal’s [**online**](https://www.scholarscentral.org/submissions/pharmaceutical-sciences-emerging-drugs.html) portal.

Looking forward for your response  
Have a nice day ahead.

**With Best Regards  
Catherine G**Editorial Team  
Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences & Emerging Drugs

**Discussion**

It is very rare, even for top researchers, to be invited by reputable journals to submit a manuscript. When this happens, it is usually because the researcher did a good peer review, and the editor asks for a commentary or editorial to be published alongside the paper.15

In contrast, little known researchers may receive many invitations to submit papers to predatory journals.13,25 A Brazilian academic in dentistry received 35 invitations per week even though he had published only 10 PubMed indexed papers as corresponding author.9 Only 42% of the journals were relevant for dentistry, e.g. some addressed mining & mineral science, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, and marine science.

In another case, a junior academic from Australia received 237 invitations in one year to publish a manuscript after he had published his first paper, which was a two-page editorial.13

During six months, a Canadian surgeon received 285 invitations to submit a manuscript to 146 journals and 211 to present at a conference.12 There were obvious spelling or grammar errors in 90% vs 73% of the invitations and excessively flattering language in 46% vs 43%.

I have published 347 papers in journals with peer review and 108 of these have appeared in “the big five” (*BMJ*, *Lancet*, *JAMA*, *Annals of Internal Medicine* and *New England Journal of Medicine*). My scientific works have been cited over 150,000 times, and my H-index is 82, which means that 82 papers have been cited at least 82 times. I have also written several books, one of which has come out in 18 languages,26 and I have 28,000 followers on Twitter.

With this profile, I am easy to find for people who want to bolster the reputation of their journals, but I receive “only” about 20 invitations per week to publish and two to predatory conferences. Clearly, predatory journals do not primarily hunt for prestigious researchers but for weaker prey that might be willing to pay to publish rather than perish, particularly unexperienced researchers from low- and middle income countries.4,6 Medires Publishing write on their homepage mediresonline.org: “supports all researchers to make reaching the furthest with their research. Special attention will be taken to the researchers that are coming from developing regions.”

There was rarely a submission website or guidance to authors. I was just asked to send an email with my manuscript, with a deadline of about two weeks.

The poor English in most invitations is remarkable considering how brief the emails are. The median number of words in the invitations I received was only 103. The writers sometimes confused singular and plural, even in their own journal titles, and used capital letters and exclamation marks indiscriminate-ly.

A likely reason why journal titles are often a strange or meaningless hodgepodge of words is that more meaningful titles were already taken by reputable journals. One example is *[International Journal of Current Research](https://www.journalcra.com/)*. What research? Everything on the planet? I also find “current research” an idiotic term. What else could it be? Old research from an archive or future research that only exists in the researchers’ imagination? As an antidote to all these journals that has “recent,” “current,” “future” or “frontiers” in their titles, my wife, who is also a researcher, invented an imaginary journal she called *Pathology Yesterday.*

Fraud is prevalent and people who pay to publish in predatory journals cannot know if their paper will ever appear. And if it does, if it will be permanently available. One analysis showed that three publishers who listed 76, 76 and 204 biomedical journals did not publish any article, and four other publishers who listed 77, 76, 133, and 113 journals published only 1, 3, 2, and 2 articles, respectively.14 If predators close their business, they will have no incentive to sustain their archives.

A promise that there will be no article processing charge is also likely to be fake. I have received many such emails but, surely, the journal will then charge you for something else. In one case, a journal admitted that there would be a charge (no amount stated) for the indexing of the article. The subject line of several invitations contained the term “No APC” as if we all know what an APC is. I wrote to [*Exploration of Neuroscience*](https://www.explorationpub.com/Journals/en): “There are very few open access journals with no author publication fee. How is your journal financed?” Their reply was: “The journal is wolly financed by the publisher, Open Exploration Publishing Inc., which is owned by the President Wang Xing. He holds multiple enterprises in China and abroad, and now invests in Open Access publishing that he firmly believe is the future of publishing industry. So you can trust that the journal can operate well with the steady investment from our publisher.”

As already noted, fake impact factors and fake names are common. Some Austin journals have even had a prankster's dog on their editorial boards.16 The dog’s owner said the stunt portraying his dog as a medical researcher began as a light-hearted response to email scams.27 In 2017, the dog served on seven medical journal editorial boards; it was listed as an associate editor for the [*Global Journal of Addiction & Rehabilitation Medicine*](https://juniperpublishers.com/gjarm/) from Juniper Publishers; and it had been asked to peer review a paper.

Dogs may have a future in research. When I was asked to propose research projects related to psychia-try on a website, I needed to state my gender, which could be male, female, doesn’t want to tell, and other. I clicked on other and explained that I am a dog.

***Limitations***

I have not been able to include a representative sample of invitations from predatory publishers, as the field is vast, and as some invitations are specific for the research areas where I have been active.

***What should we do?***

Predatory scientific journals and conferences deceive many people who buy into something they don’t get. It is consumer fraud, but it is difficult to hold people accountable. In 2016, the US Federal Trade Commis-sion filed a lawsuit against the OMICS Group, iMedPub, Conference Series, and Srinubabu Gedela, an Indian who is president of the companies.4 The Trade Commission won the suit in 2019 and was awarded 50 million dollars in damages and a broad injunction against OMICS practices, but it will likely never collect the award, since the rulings of US courts are not enforceable in India, and since OMICS does not have property in the USA. OMICS continue to defraud people. I received invitations to publish in [*Journal of Neurological Disorders*](https://www.hilarispublisher.com/neurological-disorders.html) in 2021, 2022 and 2023 and in [*Journal of Blood & Lymph*](https://www.hilarispublisher.com/blood-lymph.html)in 2022 from Hilaris Publisher, owned by OMICS.17

We need to write much more about predatory journals and conferences; maintain websites about them; and to always scrutinize the journals in applications for funding or jobs if we don’t recognize them. The deceptions are so effective that it never dawned on me that the many invitations I get to present at conferences in Dubai, Japan and elsewhere were all fake before I wrote this article.

I have uploaded this paper on a preprint server. It will be interesting to see if I get invitations to publish it in predatory journals.

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