

Problem of predatory journals



Illustration by David Parkins

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Content of the lecture

What will I talk about?

- My own experience
- Open access publishing
- Jeffrey Beall
- Predatory journals, publishers and conferences
- How to recognize predatory Publisher?
- Selected publishers (MDPI, Frontiers, ...)
- Conclusion



„My predator“



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Biomedical and Pharmacology Journal. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, Journal, Editorial Board, Indexed In, Current Issue, In Press, Previous Issues, Online Submission, and Contact Us. Below the navigation is a banner for "Journal is Indexed in:" featuring logos for Scopus, CCAS, National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and J-Gate. The main content area includes a journal cover image, a description of the journal as an international, peer-reviewed quarterly research journal, and a table with journal details. To the right, there are sections for "Associations and Memberships", "Follow us on:" with social media icons, and "Scopus Journal Metrics" showing a 2021 CiteScore of 1.4 (25th percentile) and an Open Access logo.

Biomedical and Pharmacology Journal (BPJ) is an international, peer reviewed quarterly research journal. The journal seeks to promote research, exchange of scientific information, consideration of regulatory mechanisms that affect drug development and utilization, and medical education in the challenging and evolving pharmaceutical and biomedical fields. BPJ is abstracted and indexed in almost all reputed National and International agencies.

Abbreviation of Journal : Biomed. Pharmacol. J.
DOI Prefix : 10.13005
Frequency : Quarterly (March, June, September, December)

OPEN ACCESS

- Scientometric data since 2014
- My experience as a reviewer
- Scopus database

Journal is Indexed in:
CABELLS
SCHOLARLY ANALYTICS
Cabells Whitelist

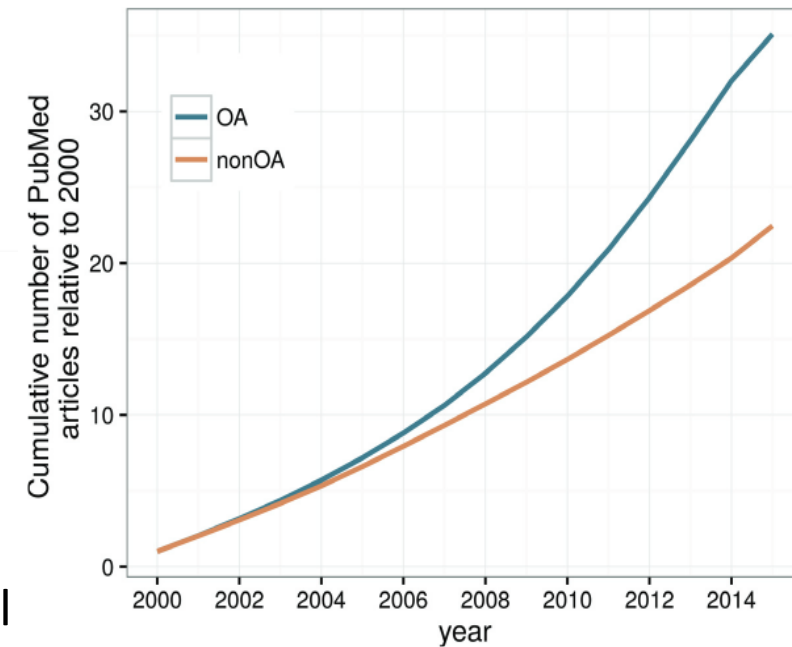
Open Access journals



- Before year 2000 – „Subscription-based journals“
- „Open access journals“
 - Gold open access
 - Green open access
 - Hybrid model – Open access publishing in Subscription-based journal

→ cited more often

→ faster publishing and wider distribution



WHY OPEN ACCESS TO SCIENTIFIC PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS?



GOOD FOR SCIENCE

allows scientists to build on previous research results and avoids unnecessary duplication of effort
improved quality and greater efficiency



GOOD FOR THE ECONOMY

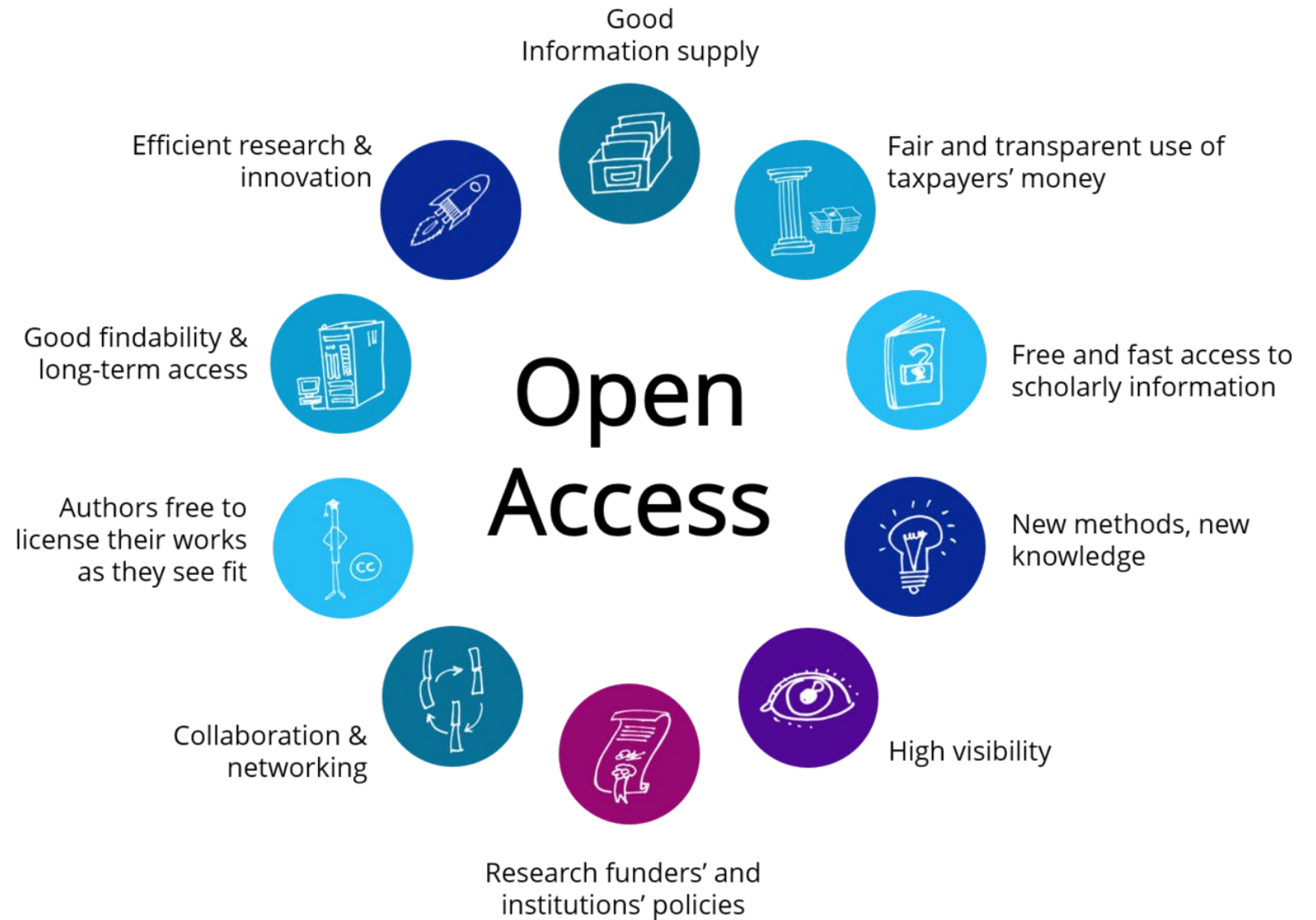
speeds up innovation
faster progress to market



GOOD FOR SOCIETY

makes research available to individual citizens and to non-profit organisations
greater transparency

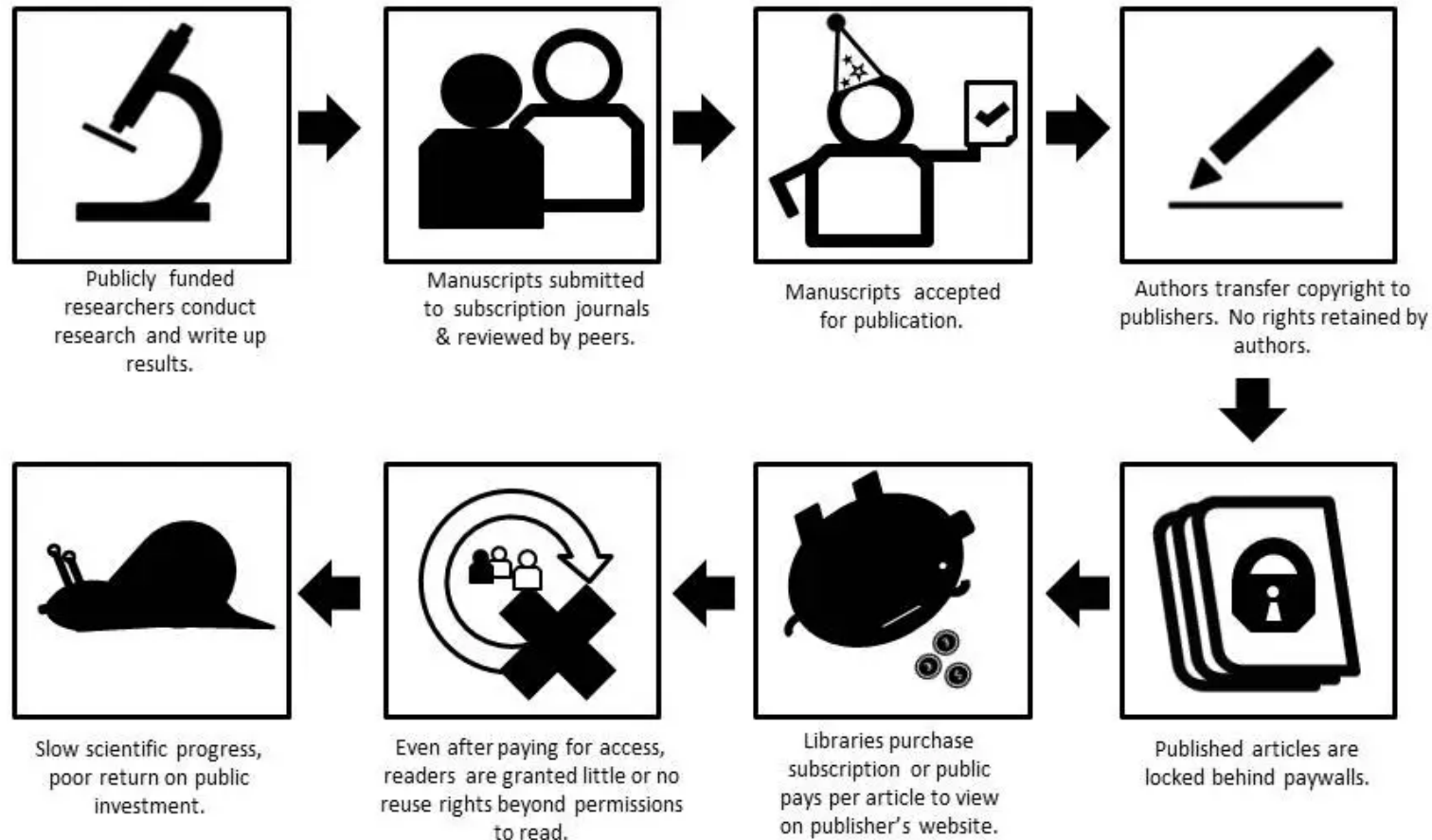
Open Access



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

TRADITIONAL SUBSCRIPTION PUBLISHING

limited dissemination, economic efficiency & social impact

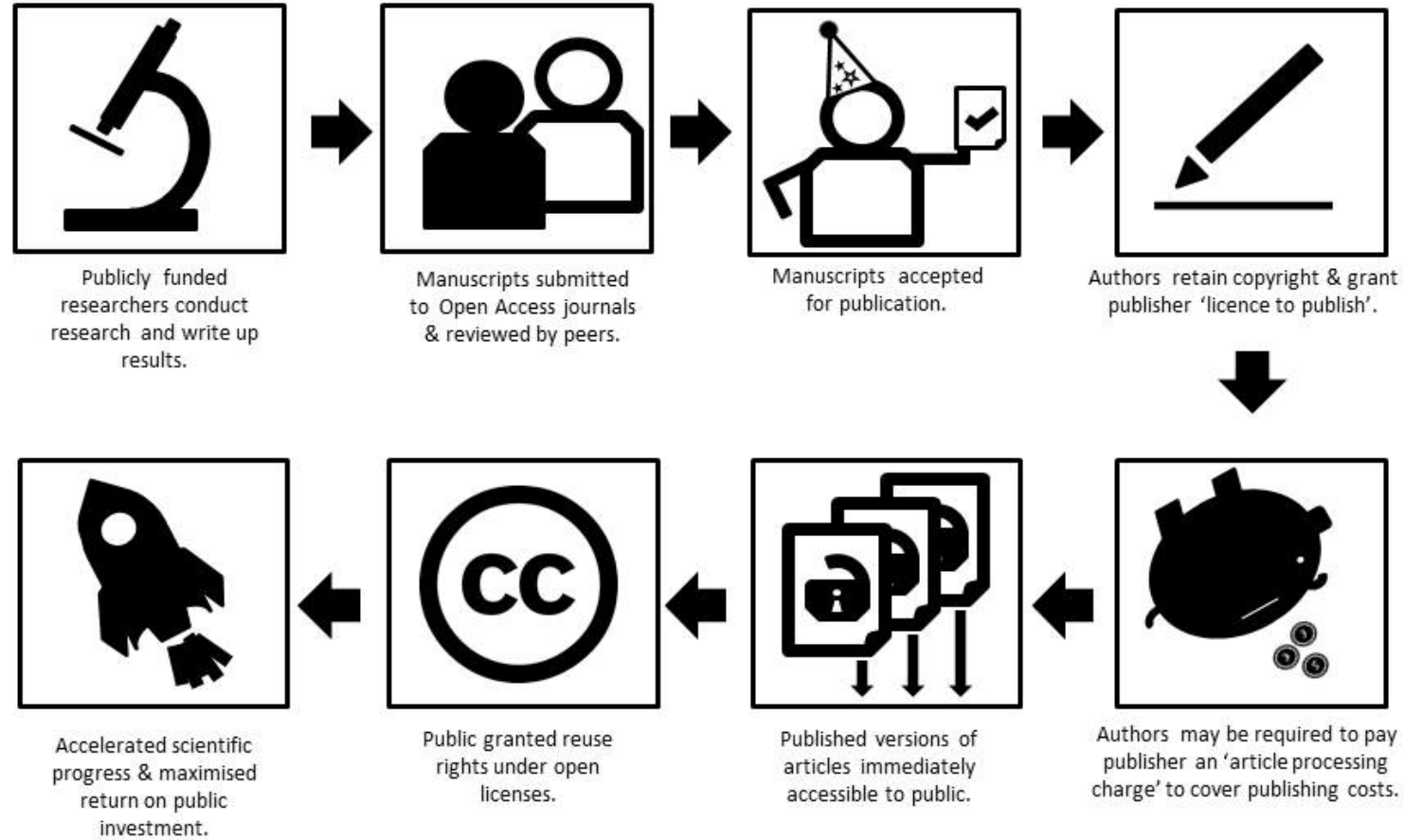


No monetary component in the relationship between publishers and their authors.



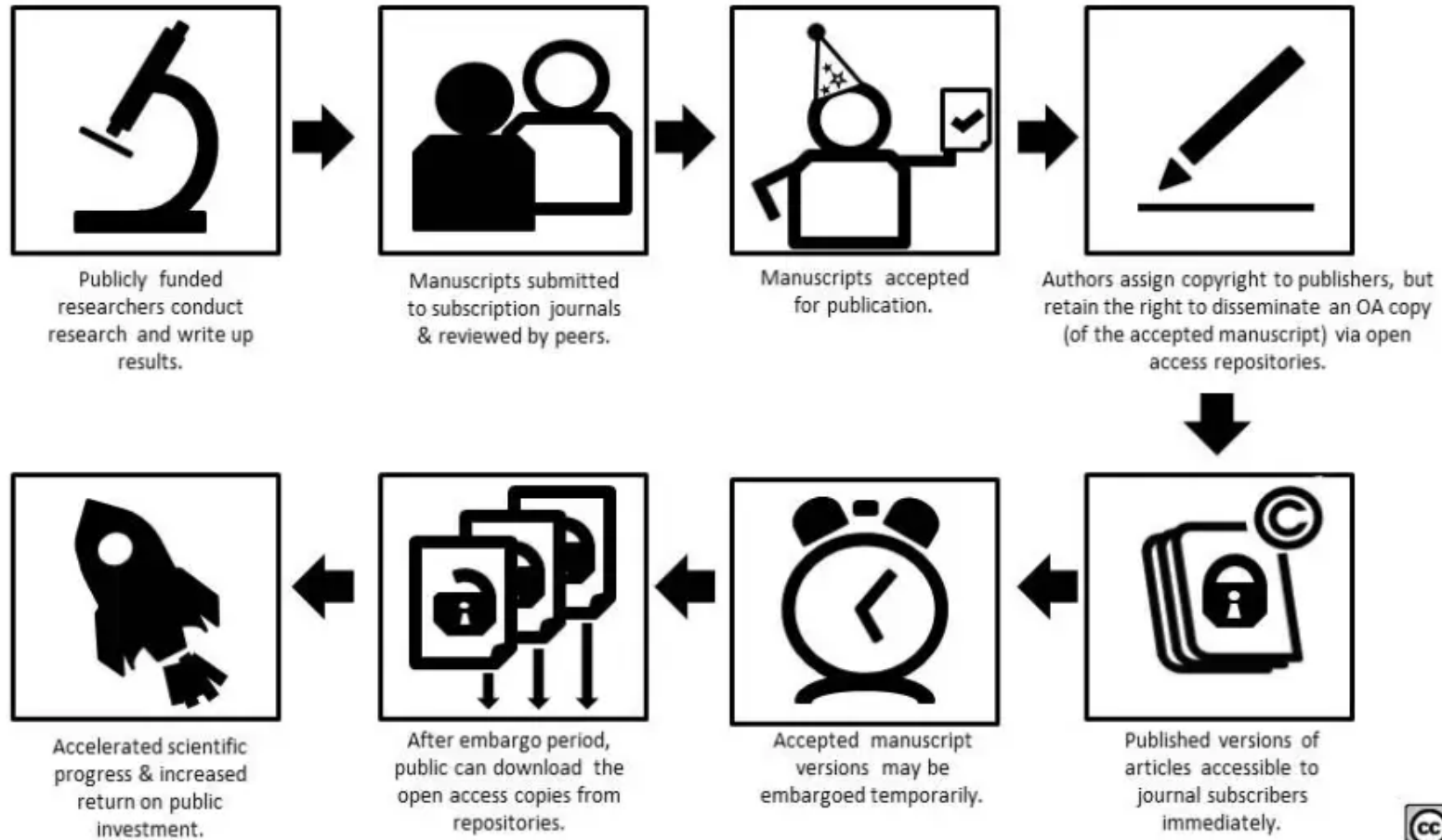
GOLD OPEN ACCESS

maximised dissemination, economic efficiency & social impact



GREEN OPEN ACCESS

increased dissemination, economic efficiency & social impact



BUT !

OA journals are dependent on authors „Publication processing fees“ → **conflict of interest!**

Publishers are forced to:

- Publish as fast as possible
- Publish as many papers as possible
- Solicit authors for papers
- Achieving a high publication acceptance rate

→ **Drop of their scientific standards and peer review quality**

Credible journals



Peer review, Revisions, Rejections

Predatory journals



Greetings, We Adore Your Research!

Jeffrey Beall



- American librarian and library scientist at the University of Colorado Denver.
- Coined the term „predatory publishing“
- 2011 - **Beall's List**
- Noted that the quality of articles published in many OA journals is **low**, that peer review in many OA journals is **negligible or non-existent**, that public access to poor-quality articles **harms the public**, and that the careers of young scholars who publish in poor-quality OA journals are **harmed**.
- **John Bohannon** – „sting operation“ - concluded that Beall is "good at spotting publishers with poor quality control,, (82% journals from Beall's list accepted sting publication)
- *„He basically found what I've been saying for years“*
- 18% of publishers identified by Beall as predatory rejected the fake paper
- 2017 - Was forced to remove his website
 - A demand by Frontiers Media to open a research misconduct case against Beall

www.beallslist.net

BEALL'S LIST

OF POTENTIAL PREDATORY JOURNALS AND PUBLISHERS

PUBLISHERS

STANDALONE JOURNALS

VANITY PRESS

CONTACT

OTHER

Search for publishers (name or URL)

 *John Bohannon - Who's Afraid of Peer Review?*

 *Beall, Jeffrey (2017). "What I learned from predatory publishers". Biochemia Medica.*

Whitelists x Black Lists



- **Directory of Open Access Journals**

- The mission of DOAJ is to "increase the visibility, accessibility, reputation, usage and impact of quality, peer-reviewed, open access scholarly research journals globally, regardless of discipline, geography or language".
- 18 897 indexed journals



- **Journal Citation Reports (JCR)**

- **Cabells Whitelist x Blacklist (=Journalytics and Predatory Reports)**



- **"Dr. Fraud" experiment ("Anna O. Szust")**

- Among journals sampled from DOAJ, **8 of 120 accepted Szust.**

- **None of the 120** sampled journals listed in Journal Citation Reports (JCR) offered Szust the position.

„My predator“



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Biomedical and Pharmacology Journal (BPJ) is an international, peer reviewed quarterly research journal. The journal seeks to promote research, exchange of scientific information, consideration of regulatory mechanisms that affect drug development and utilization, and medical education in the challenging and evolving pharmaceutical and biomedical fields. BPJ is abstracted and indexed in almost all reputed National and International agencies.

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OPEN ACCESS

Associations and Memberships

Follow us on:

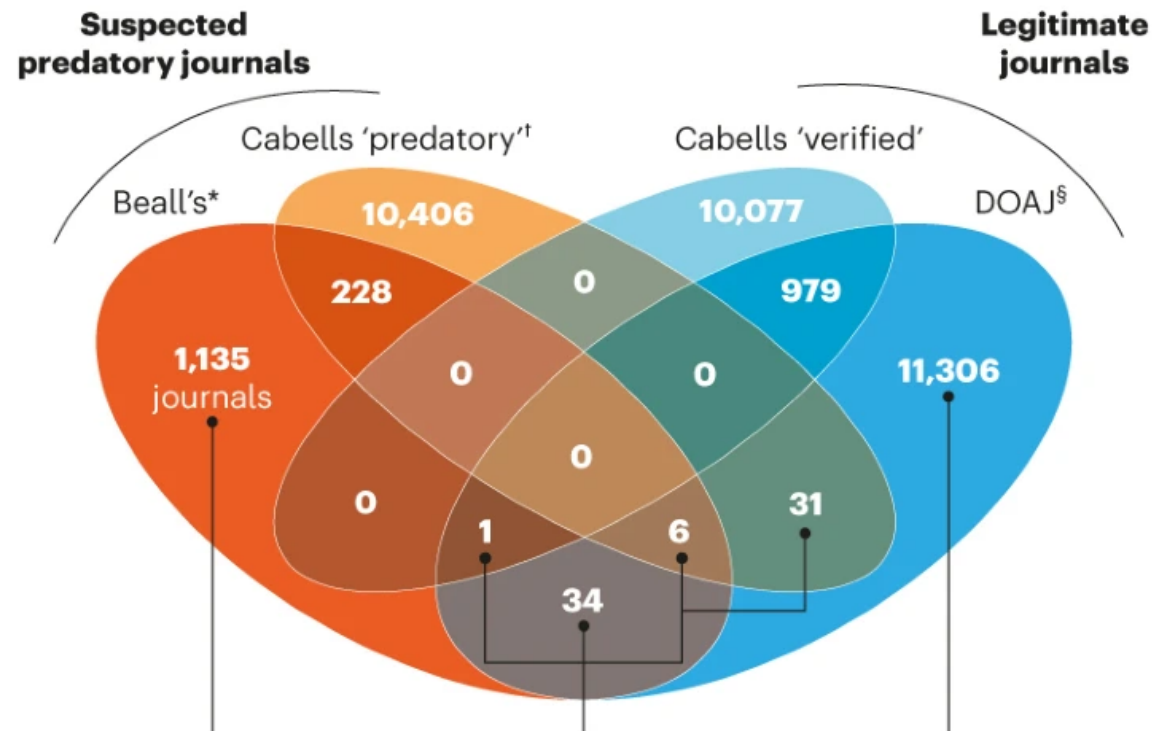
Scopus Journal Metrics

1.4 ²⁰²¹ CiteScore
25th percentile
Powered by Scopus

- Scientometric data since 2014
- My experience as a reviewer
- Scopus database



No list to rule them all



Beall's list highlighted the issue of predatory journals, but faced criticism over transparency and legal threats from listed titles. It ceased operation in 2017.

Some journals deemed legitimate by the DOAJ were deemed predatory by Beall's and/or Cabells lists.

The DOAJ relies mainly on information from publishers. It regularly purges titles that do not meet quality criteria.

*Informally assessed by University of Colorado Denver librarian Jeffrey Beall in -2008-17; [†]Pay-to-access lists from Cabells, a scholarly analytics company; [§]The Directory of Open Access Journals, a community-curated list requiring journal best practices such as peer review and statements on author fees and licensing.

Predatory journals

- Predatory journals are a huge and quickly growing problem: in 2015, 1000 predatory publishers were publishing 8000 active open access journals (one-quarter of all open access journals). In total, these journals have published 520,000 articles. This is the same size as the legitimate Open Access publishing industry.

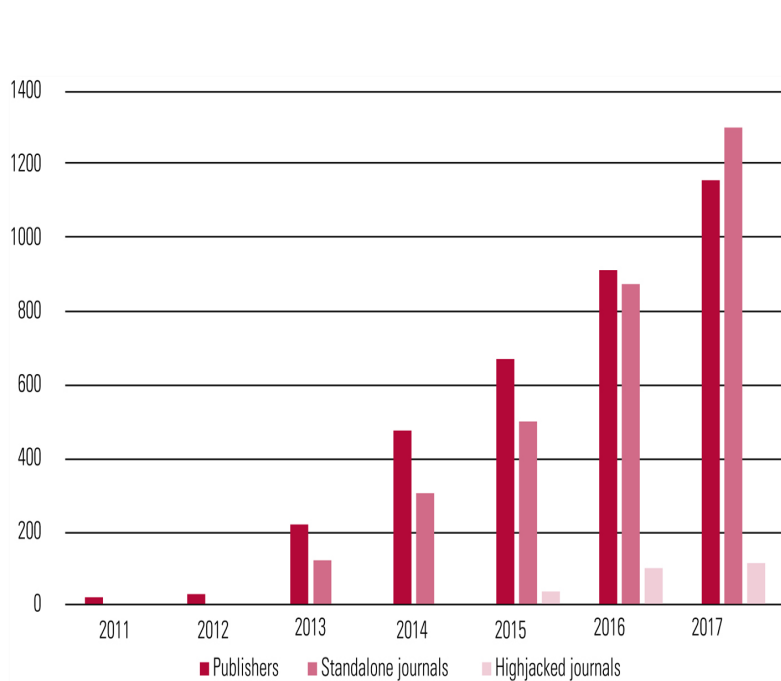
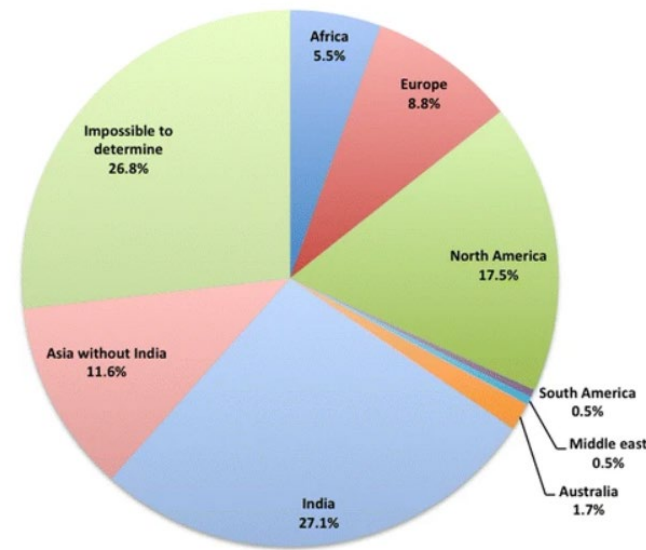
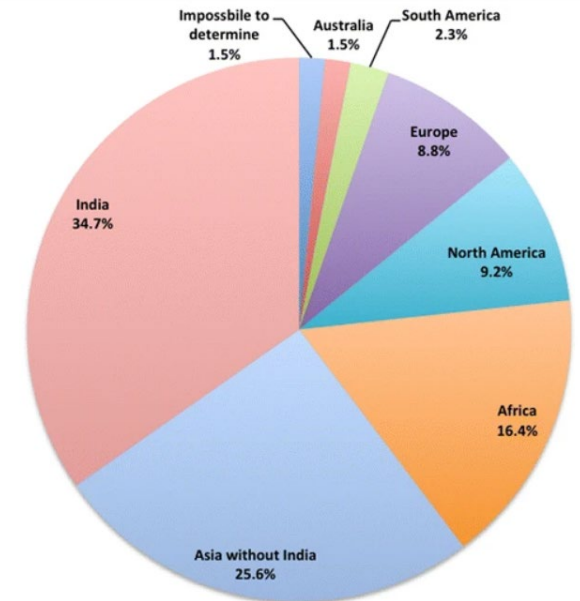


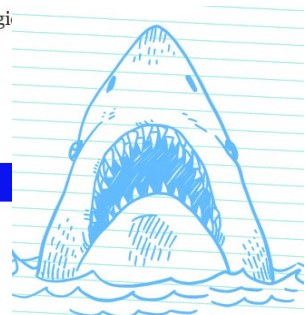
Fig. 6



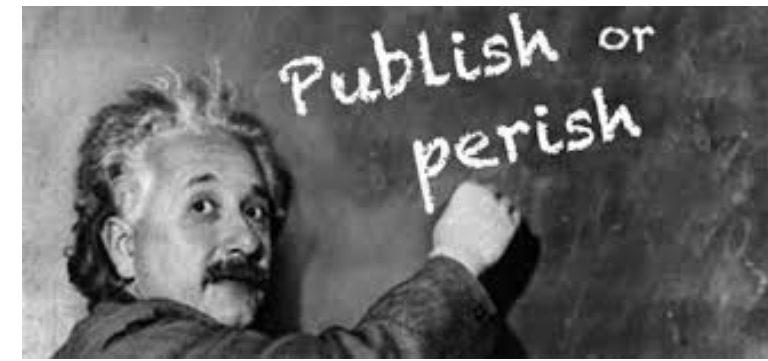
The distribution of publishers (n = 656) by geographic regions



The distribution of the corresponding authors by geographic region



Predatory journals



Works in predatory journals*

* For the period 2015-2017

Top 20	%
1. Kazakhstan	17.00
2. Indonesia	12.94
3. Iraq	12.94
4. Albania	12.08
5. MALAYSIA	11.60
6. India	9.65
7. Oman	8.25
8. Yemen	7.79
9. Nigeria	7.31
10. Sudan	7.20
11. Jordan	7.19
12. Morocco	6.95
13. Syria	6.88
14. Philippines	6.68
15. Egypt	6.65
16. Palestine	6.56
17. Tajikistan	6.48
18. South Korea	6.37
19. Libya	6.06
20. Brunei	5.44



Article

Efficiency of “Publish or Perish” Policy—Some Considerations Based on the Uzbekistan Experience

Bahtiyor Eshchanov ^{1,*}, Kobilbek Abduraimov ², Mavluda Ibragimova ³ and Ruzumboy Eshchanov ⁴

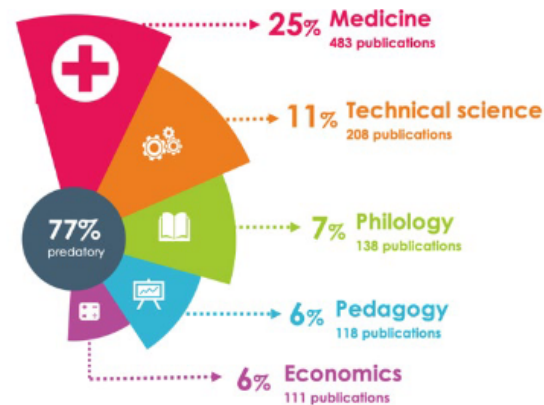


Figure 12. Top-five academic disciplines based on the number of predatory publications.

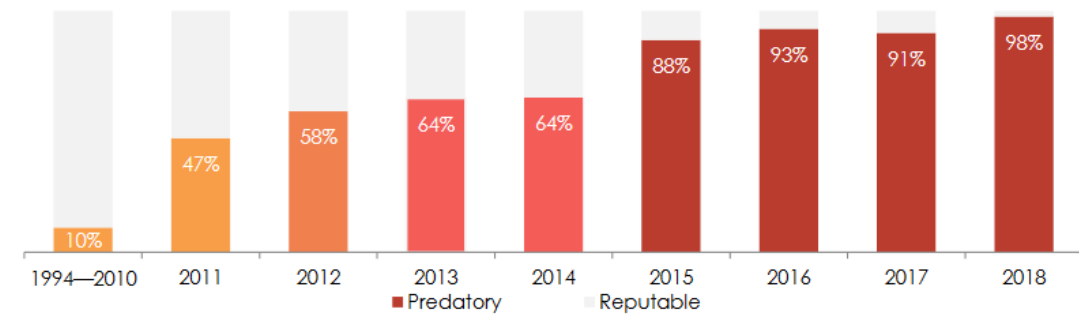


Figure 6. Histogram of number of international articles per author.

Definitions

Predatory journal = Deceptive journals

- The consensus definition reached was: “Predatory journals and publishers are entities that **prioritize self-interest** at the expense of scholarship and are **characterized by false or misleading information, deviation from best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices.**”

Hijacked journals

- duplicate or fake websites of legitimate journals utilizing the title, ISSN and other information of the reputable journal.



01.02.2023

COMMENT | 11 December 2019 **nature**

Predatory journals: no definition, no defence

Leading scholars and publishers from ten countries have agreed a definition of predatory publishing that can protect scholarship. It took 12 hours of discussion, 18 questions and 3 rounds to reach.

[Agnes Grudniewicz](#), [David Moher](#), [Kelly D. Cobey](#), [Gregory L. Bryson](#), [Samantha Cukier](#), [Kristiann Allen](#), [Clare Ardern](#), [Lesley Balcom](#), [Tiago Barros](#), [Monica Berger](#), [Jairo Buitrago Ciro](#), [Lucia Cugusi](#), [Michael R. Donaldson](#), [Matthias Egger](#), [Ian D. Graham](#), [Matt Hodgkinson](#), [Karim M. Khan](#), [Mahlubi Mabizela](#), [Andrea Manca](#), [Katrin Milzow](#), [Johann Mouton](#), [Marvelous Muchenje](#), [Tom Olijhoek](#), [Alexander Ommaya](#), [Bhushan Patwardhan](#), [Deborah Poff](#), [Laurie Proulx](#), [Marc Rodger](#), [Anna Severin](#), [Michaela Strinzel](#), [Mauro Sylos-Labini](#), [Robyn Tamblin](#), [Marthie van Niekerk](#), [Jelte M. Wicherts](#) & [Manoj M. Lalu](#) — Show fewer authors

How to recognize predatory publishers?



Red flags suggestive of a predatory journal:

- The journal's **scope is very broad** (e.g. the whole of medicine plus/minus non-biomedical subjects).
- The website contains **spelling and grammatical errors**, along with **poor-quality images**.
- The use of **unrecognised or misrepresented impact factors**, including promotion of the *Index Copernicus*, *CiteFactor*, *Journal Impact Factor (JIF)*, *Universal Impact Factor (UIF)* or *Global Impact Factor (GIF)*.
- Submissions are sent **by email** rather than through a **manuscript management system**.
- The promise of **rapid publication**.
- There is no information on whether and how content will be digitally preserved.
- Information on **article processing charges (APCs)** is either missing or misleading, or charges are very low (e.g. less than US\$150) or high.
- Retention of copyright by the publisher/journal even though the journal is supposedly open access.
- Instructions for authors do not recommend the use of reporting guidelines such as CONSORT.
- **Spam emails** inviting the submission of papers, or appointment to an editorial board, that are formulaic, ungrammatical and badly spelled. Suggested topics have **little relevance to the recipient's previous work**. Content includes **flattering salutations**, claims of open access, no mention of peer-review, or the possibility of expedited review. There may be no unsubscribe link.

Dear Dr. Helan Martin,

Wish you a wonderful day.

We are in short of articles for successful issue release (ISSN: 2574 -1241) having Impact Factor: 1.229.

Can we request you to support us with a Research, Review November, we hope that a minimum of a 2-page article

We expect that you will be able to reply to this invitation

Await your promising response

Angela Roy

Biom...
nurs...
One...
Ph...

SCIREA Journal

Dear

Greetings from the

We get to know you

topic of the paper has

Here attached the abstract

Title: Strict Adherence

Abstract: During the

experience with a pandemic

introduce an effective

contributed to the success

directly cared for patients

assess the infection rate in ICU health care professionals who were involved in

management of the first wave of the pandemic and the experience gained during

pandemic as well as other epidemics in the future. Here we bring our findings

critically ill Covid-19 positive patients from whole region. ? 2021 O

Please Click Here To Submit Your New Manuscript

Dear Dr. Martin Heln,

We will be thankful if you could spare your 2 minutes of your valuable time on our request.

November 24 is considered as Thanksgiving Day. On, this occasion, I have planned to release special edition for which we are in deficit of only one article to rejoice this event fruitfully.

Dear Professor,

We hope you are having a great day...!!

Providing fresh perspectives in
Pharmaceutical Science, A

We feel you would be an

Full Name: Global Conference

Theme: Overview of Recent

Date: March 18-19, 2023

Web Address: <https://clinicalpharmaforum.com/>

November 2022 in my email box:

- 28 email invitations to submit in predatory journals
- 17 invitation as a speaker for predatory conferences

Online registration and abstract submissions are open. Submit your abstract and confirm your slot.

We solicit you to kindly accept our invitation and oblige us. Your support is precious. I would be grateful for a line of confirmation by return mail.

Awaiting your response.

Best Regards,

Dr. Kevin Durant

Scientific Relations Officer

Virtual Pharma 2022

Email: pharma@impactgather.com

How not to be prey?



Are you submitting your research to a trusted journal?

Publishing your research results is key to **advancing your discipline** – and your **career** – but with so many journals in your field, how can you be sure that you're choosing a **reputable, trustworthy** journal?



Tips to **confirm** a journal's credentials and decide if it will help you **reach** the right audience with your research, and make an **impact** on your career.

Take control of your career at
thinkchecksubmit.org

Reference this list for your chosen journal to check if it is trusted.

Do you or your colleagues know the journal?

- Have you read any articles in the journal before?
- Is it easy to discover the latest papers in the journal?
- Name of journal: is the journal name the same as or easily confused with that of another?
- Can you cross check with information about the journal in the [ISSN portal](#)?

Can you easily identify and contact the publisher?

- Is the publisher name clearly displayed on the journal website?
- Can you contact the publisher by telephone, email, and post?

Is the journal clear about the type of peer review it uses?

- Does the website mention whether the process involves independent/external reviewers, how many reviewers per paper?
- Is the publisher offering a review by an expert editorial board or by researchers in your subject area?
- Does the journal guarantee acceptance or a very short peer review time?

Are articles indexed and/or archived in dedicated services?

- Will your work be indexed/archived in an easily discoverable database?
- Does the publisher ensure **long term archiving and preservation** of digital publications?
- Does the publisher use permanent digital identifiers?

Is it clear what fees will be charged?

- Does the journal site explain what these fees are for and when they will be charged?
- Does the publisher explain on their website how they are financially supported?
- Do they mention the currency and amount of any fees?
- Does the publisher website explain whether or not waivers are available?

Are guidelines provided for authors on the publisher website?

- For open access journals, does the publisher have a clear **license** policy? Are there preferred licenses? Are there exceptions permitted depending on the needs of the author? Are license details included on all publications?
- Does the publisher allow you to retain **copyright** of your work? Can you share your work via, for example, an institutional repository, and under what terms?
- Does the publisher have a clear policy regarding potential conflicts of interest for authors, editors and reviewers?
- Can you tell what formats your paper will be available in? (e.g. HTML, XML, PDF)
- Does the journal provide any information about **metrics of usage or citations**?

Is the publisher a member of a recognized industry initiative?

- Do they belong to the **Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)**?
- If the journal is open access, is it listed in the **Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)**?
- If the journal is open access, does the publisher belong to the **Open Access Scholarly Publishers' Association (OASPA)**?
- Is the journal hosted on one of INASP's **Journals Online** platforms (for journals published in Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Central America and Mongolia) or on **African Journals Online** (AJOL, for African journals)?
- If the journal is open access, is it hosted on **Scielo** (for Latin American scientific journals)?
- If the journal is open access, is it indexed in **Latindex** (for journals that are published in Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain, and Portugal)?
- If the journal is open access, is it indexed by **Redalyc** (for journals that are published in Latin America and the Caribbean, Spain, and Portugal)?
- Is the publisher a member of another trade association?

Is MDPI a predatory publisher?

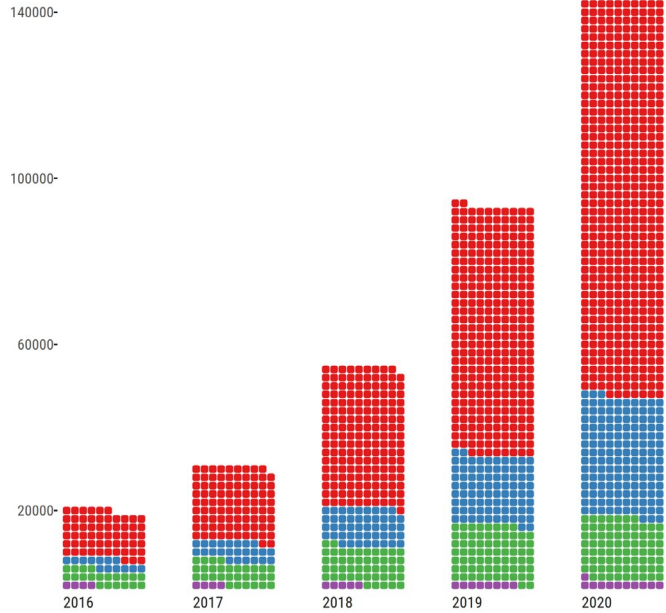
- Journals with high impact factor (18 journals have an IF higher than 4)
- Many indexed in Web of Science.
- Most papers are good.
- Several distinguished colleagues in nearly all fields served as Guest Editors or as Editors for their journals, often reporting positive assessments.
- MDPI's editing is fast, reliable, professional;
- Publication on the website is swift, efficient and smooth
- Several MDPI journals are included in the rankings used by different states to evaluate research and grant promotions.

- MDPI is known for aggressively spamming academics to edit special issues,
- often in fields that are far away from the expertise of the recipient of the frequent and insisting emails.
- MDPI even asked Jeffrey Beall to edit a Special Issue in a field that is not his own.
- In 2018 the whole editorial board of Nutrients, one of the most prestigious MDPI journals, resigned en-masse lamenting pressures from the publisher to lower the quality bar and let in more papers.

Is MDPI a predatory publisher?

Articles in Normal, Special Issues, Sections and Collections at MDPI

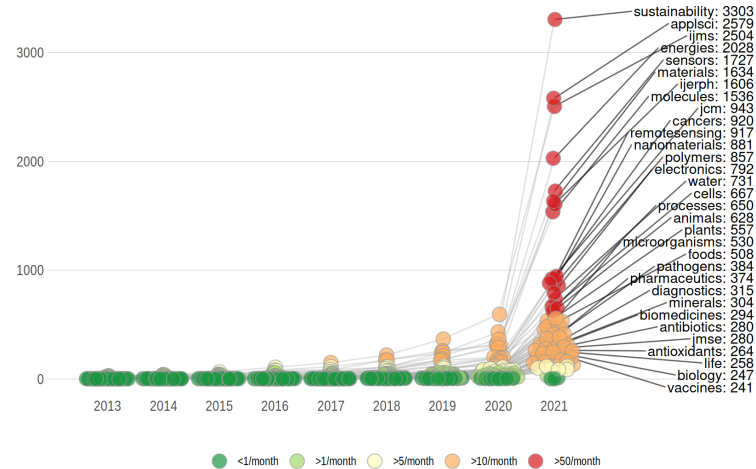
74 journals with an Impact Factor. One square = 200 articles



Data:MDPI - code: @paolocrosetto

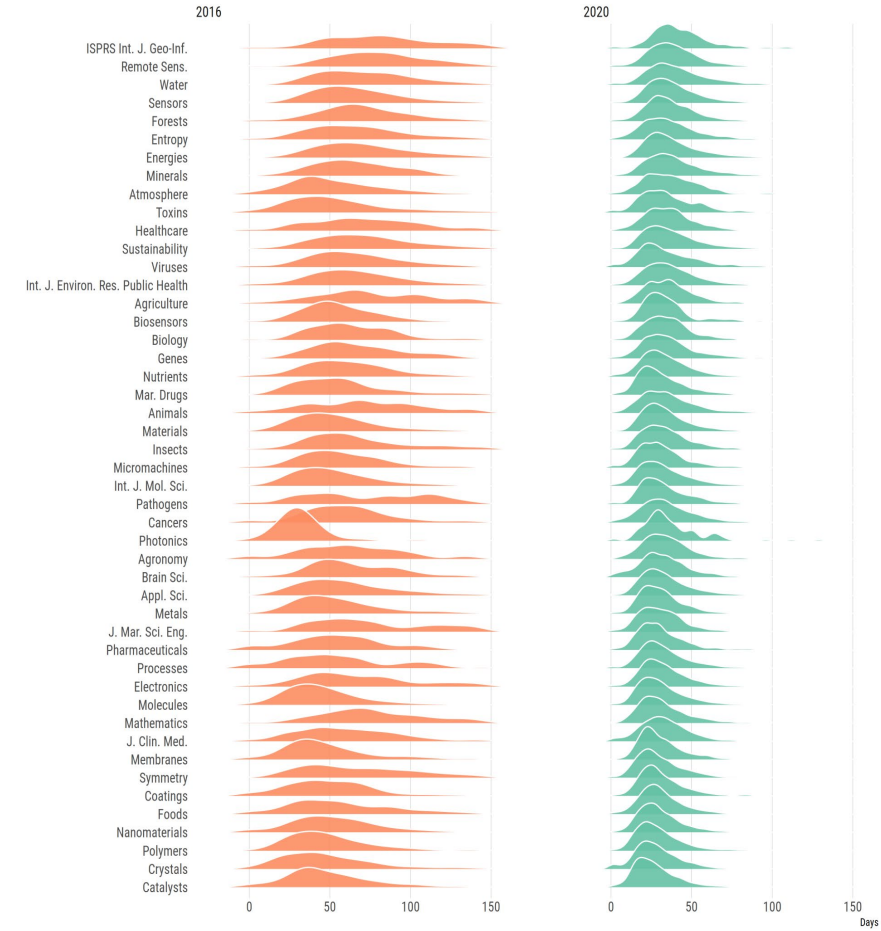
Number of Special Issues at MDPI

75 journals with an Impact Factor



code @paolocrosetto - data scraped from MDPI website

Lag from submission to acceptance at top MDPI Journals



data: MDPI - code: @paolocrosetto

Is MDPI a predatory publisher?

Vědecká rada AV ČR (usnesení z 8. zasedání VR dne 21. 04. 2022):

1. doporučuje **pečlivě zvažovat** publikování v časopisech společnosti MDPI z důvodu snižující se kvality recenzního řízení,
2. se obrací na rady výzkumných organizací, aby se zabývaly otázkou hodnocení publikací v časopisech a monografiích svých oborů, zejména u těch nakladatelství, která při open access přístupu upřednostňují kvantitu a rychlost publikování před kvalitou a nezávislostí recenzního řízení.
3. upozorňuje, že publikace vydavatelství MDPI **by nemusely být v evaluačních řízeních považovány za plnohodnotné publikační výstupy.**

Masarykova Univerzita – Doporučení Knihovny Univerzitního kampusu, Brno:

1. Neexistuje jednotné stanovisko MU k MDPI
2. MDPI splňuje všech 10 kritérií KUK
3. KUK zajišťuje poradenskou službu při pochybách zda publikovat v určitém časopise
4. Dle zkušeností ostatních ale nedoporučuje:
 - Publikovat ve speciálních číslech MDPI
 - Publikovat v Ekonomických časopisech
 - Publikovat v časopisech Land a Sustainability

Is Frontiers a predatory publisher?

- As of 2022, Frontiers publishes over **185** academic journals, with a total of **51** journals ranked with an **impact factor**.
- 130 journals indexed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (**DOAJ**).
- 60 journals listed in **PubMed** Central (PMC).
- Over 70 journals listed in **Scopus**
- Over 65 journals indexed in **Web of Science**
- member of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (**OASPA**) and a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (**COPE**).

- 2015 - classified as a **possible predatory** publisher by Jeffrey Beall
- 2015 – Editors complained that Frontiers Media staff were "**interfering with editorial decisions and violating core principles of medical publishing**".
→ In total 31 editors were removed.

"Frontiers has used an in-house journals **management software** that does not give reviewers the option to recommend the rejection of manuscripts" and the "system is setup to make it almost impossible to reject papers".

- In November 2016, a paper **linking vaccines to autism** was **retracted** from a Frontiers journal.

References contamination !

- According to Severin and Low, “if researchers cite articles in scientifically questionable journals, their reputation could risk as much damage as if they appear as authors in these publications”.
 - For Beall “if a scientific paper cites earlier articles published in predatory journals, it may itself be considered questionable”.
 - In medicine, a discipline severely contaminated by predatory journals, the International Committee of Medical Journals Editors recommends that “authors should avoid citing articles from predatory or pseudo-journals”.
-
- Results indicate that 59 of the 68 CABS-ranked peer-reviewed marketing journals were, up to late January 2021, **contaminated** by at least one of the four sampled predatory journals.
 - Citation contamination occurred irrespective of the age of a journal or its 2019 Journal Impact Factor.



How to improve the situation? What to recommend?

Education

- Self-education
- Education of younger researchers
- don't push too much on publishing activity

As the author

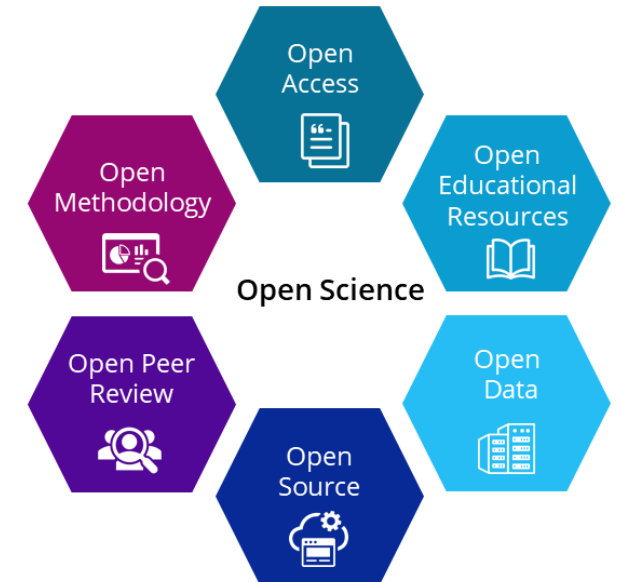


- Check all cited references for reliability and read them

As the reviewer

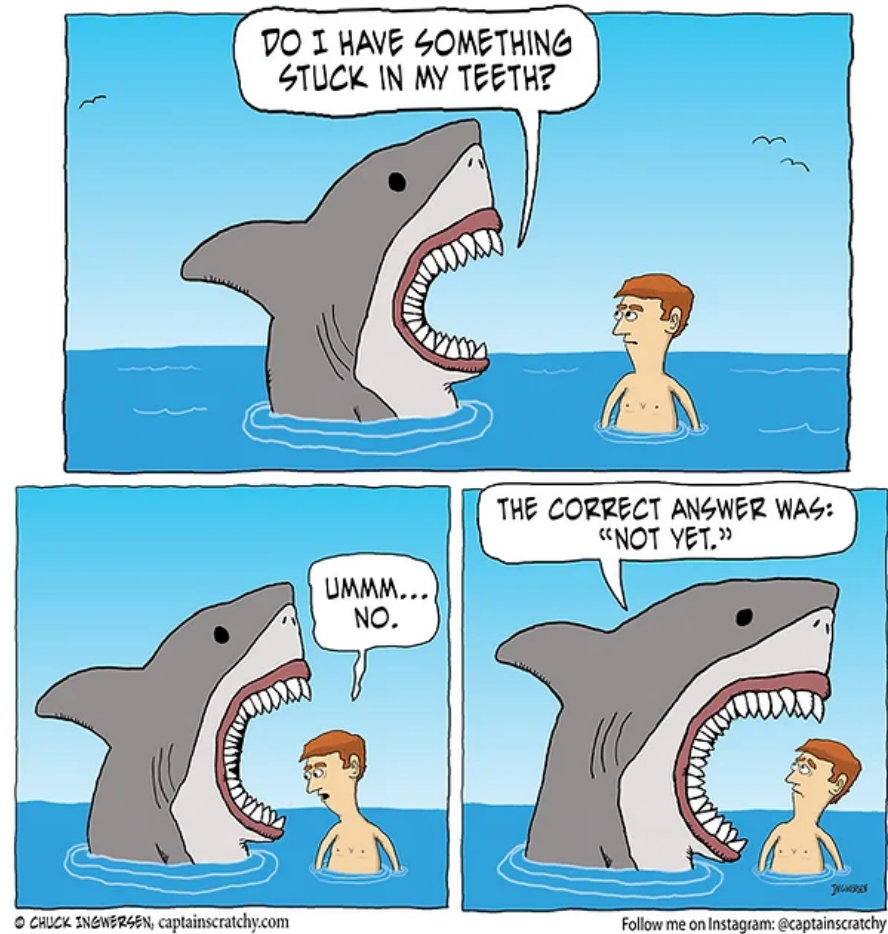
- Accept manuscript reviews – Be reasonably critical
- Check the final manuscript

The Six Principles of Open Science



CC BY 4.0 International Lizenz

Open science is based on the principles of transparency, reproducibility, reusability, and open communication



helan@fnusa.cz