

What can authors do for the papers they published in predatory journals?

To the Editor In recent years, scholarly publishing has been faced with an increasing number of questionable journals. These journals send out huge numbers of calls for papers in an effort to cheat the authors. In addition, they introduce themselves as high impact and indexed journals and promise a fast review and publishing process. As these journals generally have a very low quality or nonexistent review process, they can be repository for bogus studies. These journals have become known as “predatory journals”.¹ Jeffrey Beall was the first scientist to introduce this term to academic societies. He introduced two regularly updated lists: one for predatory journals and one for publishers known to publish them.¹ After his research, other standout scientists in the world initiated a united action against predatory journals. They tried to increase the awareness of the problem among researchers and discussed the negative effects of those journals on science.²⁻³ We need to continue efforts along this line so that the readers of all academic journals become aware of the problem.

As mentioned above, predatory journals may be a repository for bogus research. Papers published in these journals should not be cited in legitimate research. However, some authors, not realizing that a particular journal is predatory, may end up publishing their papers in this journal anyway. Only later they will understand that they published their papers in bogus journals. As the number of these affected authors is increasing, it is necessary to find a way of recognizing legitimate papers that were published in predatory journals by accident. According to Shen and Björk,⁴ predatory journals published about 420 000 articles in 2014. We cannot claim that all papers in predatory journals are bogus research, so we need ways of getting legitimate work out of predatory journals into legitimate journals.

First of all, after realizing the mistake, authors should contact the predatory journal’s office, withdraw their paper, and then submit it to a suitable journal. Unfortunately, predatory journals generally will resist withdrawals, especially if the issue has already gone to press. Second, in some limited cases after “publication,” authors still can send

their published papers to a legitimate journal. However, this solution needs collaboration between authors and journal editors and the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). Also, authors must not sign any copyright form or do not accept similar matter during submission process or after acceptance in predatory journals. Some predatory journals work by using email services and do not receive copyright form or agreement from authors, and this solution can be applied to these predatory journals. Authors must inform the editor of a legitimate journal about the mistake before submitting. As part of the review process, journals often use plagiarism software that detects papers that were previously published. In this case, editors must confirm that the original source was a predatory journal and that both authors are the same people. We emphasize that violating copyright law is not only unethical but also illegal, so authors must not sign or accept any condition during submission or publishing process in predatory journals. Also, the COPE must find a solution to protect such authors against the accusation of self-plagiarism. Currently, this approach is not available in the academic world. Finally, authors can republish their findings in a new paper. In other words, they can present their previous findings in a new form by writing a new paper. But it is necessary to inform the editors of a legitimate journal about this.

The first and the third approaches may be the most acceptable for nearly all journals. Of course, authors can republish only their own papers. They do not have the right to republish papers they have not authored. In any case, all authors must adhere to a clear definition for predatory journals and editors must have access to the latest information. Fortunately, the Beall’s list (<https://scholarlyoa.com/individual-journals/>) and his criteria are available.⁵

Predatory journals are generally ignored, causing any legitimate science within them to be lost. Republication of the legitimate work helps avoid such situation, although many papers in predatory journals would probably not pass the legitimate peer review process or their quality would be considered insufficient by journal editors.

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Conflict of interest The authors declare no conflict of interest.

How to cite Dadkhah M, Darbani SMR. What can authors do for the papers they published in predatory journals? *Pol Arch Med Wewn.* 2016; 126 (7-8): 574-575. doi: 10.20452/pamw.3485.

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