

Warning: hijacked journals

To the Editor I learned a lesson last week about how to avoid fake publishers and hijacked journals. I would like to warn all my colleagues in the medical field against submitting their manuscripts to such sham journals. They are run by individuals who prey on scientists that are in need to publish their original research work in a journal with an impact factor (IF).

Having received a call-for-paper from *Ciencia e Tecnica Vitivinicola Journal*, I checked its title, ISSN (International Standard Serial Number), and IF in a database available via the scientific information section at a university library. Everything seemed to be correct. Surprisingly, three days after manuscript submission, I received information about its acceptance and a positive review (mentioning title length, margin size, and spaces). The manuscript was to be published by the end of the month but I had to pay 454 USD. I submitted a query regarding an invoice twice, and the system kept answering only about payment within 3 days. I did not pay. I searched the Internet and found that there were two different websites of the same journal (one of which was fake), and there were numerous posts written by cheated professors and doctors.

Open access publishing is very popular nowadays. Journal hijacking means stealing the prestige of print-only journals by setting up fake websites mimicking those of legitimate journals.¹ The developers of these fake websites send a lot of call-for-papers to postgraduate students and professors from developing countries. They offer quick publishing of original and research articles in multidisciplinary, “peer-reviewed” online journals. They know the behavior of researchers who want to upgrade their academic position. They take money from authors for “article processing” (to be paid by credit card only without any invoice sent to authors or their universities/institutes). The deadline for payment is short. The review, if any, mentions margins only. The hijackers publish unreviewed manuscripts on their websites.² The authors realize they have made a mistake only when librarians reveal that the articles were published in predatory journals. As a result, some scientists had to resign from their positions or were not promoted.³ Jalalian¹ published a list of hijacked journals and I recognized many of them as spam in my mailbox.

Fake conferences with high fees and no famous speakers are another form of cybercrime against academics.² Interestingly, after submitting the manuscript to the hijacked journal, I also received an invitation to give a lecture based on one of my previous publications (in a legitimate journal with an IF). Some Polish names were mentioned among the invited speakers, but even though the main topic of the conference was my expertise, I did not know any of those people.

In conclusion, it is better to be criticized by legitimate reviewers and improve scientific work every time we submit a manuscript to a journal or apply for a grant than fall victim to hijacked journals. *Errare humanum est, sed in errare perseverare diabolicum*—to err is human.

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Conflict of interest The author declares no conflict of interest.

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