



From the Editor . . .

Predatory journals



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If you have recently accessed the Journal's website, you will see that we have added a policy on publication misconduct, which can be found under the 'Submit a paper' tab: <https://www.occhealth.co.za/pdf/OHSAPolicypublicationmisconduct.pdf>. Publication ethics extend beyond what is included in this policy, however, and include the problem of predatory journals. I was recently reminded about this when a paper that had been published in a journal I had not heard of crossed my

desk, written on the topic of occupational health and safety in Africa from a legal perspective. Naturally, I was interested in publishing a summary of the paper in *Occupational Health Southern Africa* (but referencing the journal in which it had been published). In order to do this, I needed an electronic link to the original paper, which can usually be accessed via the digital object identifier (doi) that is provided as part of the citation in most internationally accredited journals. The doi, as defined by the *Cambridge Dictionary*, is a "unique series of numbers attached to a piece of digital information such as a website, file, or online article". The doi led nowhere, and nor could I find the International Standard Serial Numbers (ISSNs) or the name of the journal in any of the accredited journal listings (Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), Scopus, Web of Science, etc.). This led me to suspect that the journal is a predatory journal. I verified my suspicion by contacting Fidelity (<https://fidelity.com/>), "a service that... responds to calls from the scholarly community for an automated service that can check and flag questionable references in manuscripts and publications".

"Predatory journals and publishers are entities that prioritise self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterised 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."¹

The journal in question ticked additional boxes for identifying it as a predatory journal, for example, the promise of a short turnaround time (two weeks), the listing of many journal titles under the same publisher (23), fake information on journal indexing (Google Scholar, Index Copernicus, etc.), and several spelling mistakes on the website.

On 18 August, Stellenbosch University hosted a webinar on 'Research publication practices' by Prof. Johann Mouton, director of the DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence for Scientometrics and STI Policy, and professor at Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST). The link to the webinar can be found at: <https://youtu.be/mgJtzHyKBs>. I highly recommend that you watch this recording.

Many of you will have heard about Jeffrey Beall who listed more than 1 200 predatory journals on his website.² Prof. Mouton estimates that there were more than 900 active publishers on Beall's list, and

more than 23 400 journals when Beall closed his website in 2017 for various reasons.³

The DHET keeps a close eye on the lists of predatory journals and does not pay subsidies to universities for papers published in these journals. The consequences are personal, too. Publishing in one of these journals damages your professional reputation and casts doubt on your integrity. Please check that a journal is accredited before you submit your manuscript. Be aware that such unethical practices extend to fake conferences and book publishers, many of which will reach out to you with offers to publicise your work in one form or another.

If you do inadvertently publish a high-quality paper in a predatory journal, Prof. Mouton advises that you remove the paper from your CV, retract the paper from the journal (which might or might not respond to you), and resubmit it to a legitimate journal. However, do inform the legitimate journal that you have retracted the paper from the predatory journal.

Having said all this, let me remind you that *Occupational Health Southern Africa* is accredited with the DHET.

In this issue we have a variety of interesting topics, covering the labelling of hearing protection devices used in South African industry and how it conforms to different standards (local and international), factors associated with sickness absenteeism in pharmaceutical manufacturing workers, and a comprehensive report about the Tshiamiso Trust from which miners and ex-miners with silicosis and/or tuberculosis (or their dependents) can claim compensation.

We are still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and many of you have lost friends and family members in recent months. I wish you strength in these difficult times, and hope that death and hospitalisation rates will decrease as vaccination rates increase.

REFERENCES

1. Grudniewicz A, Moher D, Cobey KD, Bryson GL, Cukier S, Allen K, et al. Predatory journals: no definition, no defence (comment). *Nature*. 2019; 576:201-212. Available from: <https://media.nature.com/original/magazine-assets/d41586-019-03759-y/d41586-019-03759-y.pdf> (accessed 19 Aug 2021).
2. Brezgov S. Beall's list of predatory publishers 2016. SCHOLARLYOA; 2019 May 30. Available from: <https://scholarlyoa.com/bealls-list-of-predatory-publishers-2016/> (accessed 19 Aug 2021).
3. Science Chronicle. At last, Jeffrey Beall reveals the reasons for shutting down his blog on predatory journal; 2017 Jun 13. Available from: <https://journosdiary.com/2017/06/13/jeffrey-beall-scholarly-open-access/> (accessed 19 Aug 2021).

Additional resources

1. Fidelity – enhancing trust in scholarly publishing. Available from: <https://fidelity.com/> (accessed 19 Aug 2021).
2. Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). Guidelines on good publication practice; 1999. Available from: <https://publicationethics.org/files/u7141/1999pdf13.pdf> (accessed 19 Aug 2021).
3. COPE Guidelines. Available from: <https://publicationethics.org/guidance/Guidelines> (accessed 19 Aug 2021).