

Selecting Journal for Publication in the Era of “Haste Predatory Journals and COVID-19”

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Dear Editor,

The year of Rat 2020 has brought landmark changes on the planet which is reflected in many spheres of life including the field of biomedical publication.

First, although the open-access platform and paid scientist publication had opened the gates for low quality as well as intentionally dubious scientific journals (also called predatory journals) long ago, the problem has been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. During this pandemic, the scientific world requires early and rapid dissemination of information, and such journals can do it very well as they have minimal or absent peer-review process. The term “predatory journals” was coined by Jeffrey Beall, a librarian at the University of Colorado, who also maintained a list of potentially predatory journals called “Beall’s list”. Identifying predatory journals is often difficult as an objective definition is lacking in the literature. In December 2019, a consensus definition of predatory journals was given in a meeting attended by 43 experts from 10 countries.¹ The consensus described “predatory publishers/journals” as the ones who are driven by financial gains, spread misleading information, lack transparency, do not follow best editorial/publishing practices, and use aggressive demands. A checklist to identify such journals is much needed and awaited.² The novice needs to remain alert as these journals lure by the rapidity of publication and open-access platform.

Second, Cabell’s international, a scholarly analytics company that maintains a list of such journals under the name of “Cabell’s blacklist”, has withdrawn the potentially racist terminologies from their website, after the death of George Floyd, to show their solidarity in the fight against racism. Their whitelisted and blacklisted journals are now called “journalytics” and “predatory reports”, respectively.³

Third, even the legitimate journals need to redefine current standards of peer-review and publication as proven by the recent retraction of COVID-19-related papers from high-quality journals, i.e., *Lancet* and *NEJM*.^{4,5} Enhancing transparency and legitimacy of scientific literature via “open- peer review process” and “open data” might be the future of high-quality scientific research and publication. The COVID-19 pandemic has allowed us to correct our flaws of living and doing things.

Till the scientific community evolves further, and better publication guidelines and standards are established, we have

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tried to help the young researchers in this era of haste by summarizing the journal submission process in a flowchart (see Flowchart 1).

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Flowchart 1: Flowchart to guide journal selection and submission for publication

