Predatory Publishing: What Is It?

Predatory publishers prey on unsuspecting researchers, charging these researchers publication fees without meeting the standards for academic publishing. Predatory journals lack transparency about their publishing practices; they often deceive authors into thinking they have the same quality as a legitimate journal. However, they do not provide expected editorial services, such as peer review and copyediting.¹

Predatory journals arose in response to the demand for open-access publishing. In the traditional publishing model, subscription fees support journals’ editorial services. In contrast, legitimate open-access journals are supported through publication fees paid by authors. The malevolent actors behind predatory journals took advantage of the shift toward open access by setting up journals that charge publication fees but do not provide the peer-review and editorial services of legitimate open-access journals.²

To attract and entrap researchers, predatory publishers engage in many deceptive practices: They may provide a fake editorial board (with either fake names or stolen identities), advertise a false impact factor, mimic the website of a legitimate journal, or use a name that only slightly differs from a well-known journal.³ Because they do not provide peer review, these journals can offer extremely expedited turnaround times—which can entice unsuspecting authors to submit manuscripts. Although a fast turnaround time may seem like a benefit, the lack of peer review means these journals often publish poor-quality or even junk science.¹

Publishing in predatory journals has several risks. Important research can be overlooked because of the high volume and often low quality of published
articles in these journals. In addition, articles published in predatory journals are often not indexed, meaning that these articles can be taken down and omitted from the scholarly record at any time.\(^2\) Predatory journals can also charge additional fees once an article is submitted, including a fee for withdrawing submissions.\(^4\)

It is important to note that not all journals that offer reduced editorial services are predatory; the lack of publishing services may indicate a lack of resources rather than an intent to deceive.\(^4\) For example, journals with fewer resources may not be able to provide extensive copyediting. Thus, it is important to carefully inspect journals to determine if they are legitimate before submitting to them.

Identifying these predatory journals can be challenging; there is no one-size-fits-all approach. In next month’s issue of *Library News*, we will share tips and tricks for identifying predatory journals.

**References**


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**Simplified Review Criteria for NIH Research Project Grant Applications**

The NIH recently announced that the review criteria for NIH research project grant applications will be simplified starting with applications due January 25,
The NIH has established a dedicated website with information about the simplified criteria.

The upcoming changes apply to the review framework, not the application structure. The NIH states that “we expect the simplified review framework to have minimal impact on how applications are written.” Research Plans for research project grant applications will continue to include the Specific Aims, Significance, Innovation, and Approach sections.

What is changing?

At present, research project grant applications are scored on the basis of 5 criteria: Significance, Innovation, Investigator, Approach, and Environment. Reviewers assign a score of 1 (exceptional) to 9 (poor) for each criterion and also assign an overall impact score of 1 to 9.

Beginning in January 2025, the existing 5 criteria will be organized into 3 factors:

Factor 1: Importance of the Research (corresponding to Significance and Innovation);
Factor 2: Rigor and Feasibility (corresponding to Approach); and
Factor 3: Expertise and Resources (corresponding to Investigator and Environment).

For factors 1 and 2, reviewers will assign a score of 1 (exceptional) to 9 (poor). For factor 3, reviewers will not assign a score; rather, they will assign a rating of “appropriate” or “gaps identified.” If gaps are identified, reviewers must explain them. Reviewers will also provide an overall impact score based on all 3 factors.

Factors 1 through 3 correspond, respectively, to 3 key questions regarding the proposed work:

1. Should it be done?,
2. Can it be done?, and
3. Will it be done?
Reviewers will no longer be asked to evaluate the additional considerations for Applications from Foreign Organizations, Select Agents, and Resource Sharing Plans.\textsuperscript{1,2}

**Why is the NIH implementing these changes?**

By implementing these changes, the NIH aims to address concerns raised by the scientific community.\textsuperscript{1,2} Specifically, the NIH aims to reduce the burden on reviewers to allow them to better focus on key questions 1 and 2 above. The NIH also aims to reduce reputational bias. The binary scoring system of “appropriate” or “gaps identified” for factor 3, Expertise and Resources, encourages reviewers to rate the investigators in terms of whether they will be able to perform the proposed work, not in terms of their “general scientific reputation.” \textsuperscript{1,2}

**References**


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**New! AAMC Faculty Salary Report Online**
The library is now providing online access to the compensation data from the Association of American Medical Colleges' (AAMC) Faculty Salary Report. The AAMC publishes an annual report on compensation of full-time medical school faculty broken out by rank, degree, department/specialty, medical school type, region, gender, race, and ethnicity. AAMC compensation data allows faculty to compare salaries with national and regional averages, as well as with peers in similar departments.

The AAMC also publishes other data and reports, including the U.S. Physician Workforce Data Dashboard, the Report on Residents, and the AAMC Survey of Resident/Fellow Stipends and Benefits.

MD Anderson staff can request an invitation to the AAMC report by emailing RML-Help@mdanderson.org. An invitation enables you to have a one-year subscription to the latest 3 fiscal years of salary data. There are a limited number of seats available.

AAMC data provides valuable insights into the current and future state of physician workforce, residency training, and resident and fellow benefits. To learn more about what AAMC offers, check out their Affinity groups. Affinity groups include the Group on Research, Education, and Training (GREAT) and the Group on Women in Medicine and Science (GWIMS) and much more.

Approximately, About, Around

Approximately, about, and around can all be used to indicate that a quantity is inexact. Which of these words is best depends on the context, according to the style manual of the American Medical Association.¹
In medical and scientific writing, “approximately is nearly always the best choice.”¹

**Examples:**
- Approximately 35% of the patients in the study had stage I or II disease. Our findings indicated that the optimal particle diameter was approximately 3 nm.

In nonscientific contexts, *approximately, about, and around* “are all acceptable.”¹

**Examples:**
- Travelers should keep in mind that at this time of year, the sun sets at approximately 5:30 pm.
- A taxi ride from the airport to the convention center costs about $45.
- We anticipate that around 500 attendees will visit the MD Anderson booth over the weekend.

**Reference**

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**Need a Resource? Suggest It to the Library**

Need a resource for your class, research, or regular workday, but can’t find it on the library website? We want to hear from you! Items that can be recommended for purchase include databases, eBooks, journals, and resources.
The Make a Suggestion form can be found at the bottom right corner of the library’s website or you can email a librarian for the link. When you fill out the form, be sure to include your @mdanderson.org email address. If we purchase the resource, you will be the first to know.

A lot of thought goes into the library’s purchases. Is it compliant with MD Anderson’s mission? Will the resource's company sign legal agreements that allow MD Anderson staff to use the resource? The process can be time consuming, depending on the suggested resource.

Items we have purchased based on suggestions from our patrons include the resources BioRender, Sanford Guide, and Stat+ as well as the eBooks Oncology Certified Nurse (OCN) Review, Practical Statistics for Medical Research, and Cancer Immunotherapy Principles and Practice.

Resources for Students in the School of Health Professions

The Research Medical Library has developed the SHP Student Research Guide to help students with their research and to provide them with access to textbooks. Textbooks are for the current semester only and can be accessed by using the search feature or browsing the list of textbooks in the guide. Access to textbooks is available online 24/7, whether you are on or off-campus. Please note, however, that not all required textbooks are available in this collection; many commercially available eBooks are not available for purchase by libraries.
Stay informed about upcoming classes by checking the library calendar, and explore our collection of online videos. If you need help navigating a database, consider requesting a consultation with one of our librarians. For article access, use our Interlibrary Library Loan service. Also, make sure you are enrolled in the Library Connect course on Canvas to receive helpful tips and reminders throughout the semester.

Have a question or need more information? Contact us by

- Chat
- Text: 281-369-4872
- Phone: 713-792-2282
- Email: rml-help@mdanderson.org

We are here to help you succeed!