How to spot a predatory journal

Predatory journals send phishing emails to authors, asking them to submit articles or join the editorial board. It may be tempting to reply and submit your manuscript or agree to be a member of the team. However, a lot at stake if you respond: money, time, and the reputation and discoverability of your work.

So, what makes a journal predatory? Predatory journals solicit manuscripts and ask for fees but fail to provide peer-review, editorial, indexing, or marketing services. Without editing or peer-review, your publication may be viewed with suspicion by other researchers and authors. In addition, publishing with a predatory journal often means that your article will not be indexed in major databases like PubMed, and you will not receive credit for the citation.

Four ways to spot a predatory journal

• Is the email phisy? Predatory journal emails tend to be vague and unspecific. They use journal names that sound familiar but aren’t quite right. They may have spelling errors or language that is overly enthusiastic. They often don’t include contact information, and if you Google the individual mentioned, you often cannot find them online.

• Is the website phisy? Google the journal website. Does it look cheesy, with pixelated images, too many ads, and a focus on authors instead of readers? If the journal claims to have an impact factor or impact score, check the Journal Citation Reports database to make sure the impact factor is real.

• Is the journal on Cabells Blacklist? The library subscribes to Cabells which tracks suspicious journals. If the journal or publisher is on this list, you should avoid the journal.

• Is the journal listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals? The DOAJ reviews journals regularly and will not include journals that are suspicious or predatory.
2020 Impact Factors
The latest impact factors have been released in the Journal Citation Reports (JCR) database. There are some changes to the way impact factors are calculated. You can learn more in the Spring issue of The Write Stuff. In addition, the JCR database has a new look and feel.

CLASS: Cochrane Systematic Reviews: An Introduction
Thursday, July 15; 11:00am
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- Urologic Clinics of North America

Questions about predatory journals or the JCR platform?

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