

C | O | P | E

PROMOTING INTEGRITY IN  
RESEARCH AND ITS PUBLICATION

# Perspectives on Predatory Publishing and Thoughts about Solutions

## COPE European Seminar

**September 23, 2019, Leiden**

**Deborah C. Poff, CM, PhD**

**COPE Chair**

# Presentation outline

---

1. A draft definition of Predatory Publishing – a vexatious undertaking
2. Characteristics of Predatory Publication Processes
3. Resemblance and Obfuscation?
4. What's in a name?
5. The innocent and the not so innocent
6. Who publishes in PP journals and why?
7. Business Ethics and PP
8. Approaches to addressing the issues

# Characteristics of Predatory Publishing Processes

---

## Cheating and Deception

1. PP cheat and deceive **some authors** (and indirectly funders and institutions) through charging publishing-related fees without providing expected or promised services.
2. PP deceive academics into serving on editorial boards when there is no legitimate role in oversight.
3. PP “appoint” editorial board members without their knowledge or permission.
4. In general, PP use no peer review.
5. PP impose mandatory publication fees as a condition of acceptance of an article.
6. PP refuse to retract or withdraw or ignore any request to do so.

# Draft Definition of PP

---

The systematic for profit promise and/or publication of a supposed academic product which presents itself as scholarly, legitimate, meritorious content (including in journals, monographs, books or conference proceedings) in a deceptive or fraudulent way – without any regard to quality assurance.

# Other Characteristics of PP

---

1. Misleading reporting or lack of reporting (e.g., number of manuscripts accepted, rejected, withdrawn; list of peer reviewers).
2. Language issues, including poor grammar and low production quality.
3. Lack of ethical oversight, such as, declarations to do with ethics, particularly for animal and human studies.
4. Lack of declarations of conflicts of interest, study funding, and copyright and user licences
5. Lack of corrections or retractions.
6. Lack of qualified Editor-in-Chief (if any).
7. Fictitious rejection rates, false impact factors, false claims of being indexed in legitimate indexes.
8. Falsely claiming membership in publication ethics organizations, including forgery and falsifying logos of such organizations.

# Resemblance - and Obfuscation

---

PP clearly try to hide the true nature of their journals by mimicry of legitimate publishers.

They do so by:

1. Stealing the title of a known, credible journal or creating a similar title to a known, credible journal
2. Stealing the name of a print only journal
3. Copying the name, website and fee structure of a journal but with a slightly different URL (i.e., journal hijacking)
4. Creating a website as a submission platform for multiple hijacked journals
5. Forging a logo of legitimate organizations on website falsely claiming membership (e.g., COPE)

# Recruitment Strategies

---

- As many authors have noted (e.g., Carroll, 2016) one hallmark of recruitment of PP is massive ‘cold calling’ invitations to publish in the journal via email
- These invitations frequently include invitations to join the editorial board
- Eriksson and Helgesson (2017) also note that many of these invitations are out of scope with the invitees’ expertise as there is a “familiar piracy practice of spamming researchers’ email boxes with offers to submit papers in areas they know little or nothing about...”

# What's in a name? Arguments against the term PP

---

There has been a lot of commentary criticizing the topic 'predatory publishing' as a misnomer

## ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE TERM

1. It is not descriptive or instructive of what it is supposedly describing (some suggest 'fake', 'rogue', 'questionable', parasitic, deceptive, etc.)
2. Predatory suggests victims, powerless people who are acted upon without their full knowledge while a number of studies have shown that some scholars knowingly publish in PP journals
3. Calling the issue PP obviates or mitigates personal responsibility in choosing where one publishes

# What's in a name? Arguments for the term PP

---

- Since Jeffrey Beall coined the term, it has become accepted and used by many
- If we are all familiar with the term, why change it?
- Some people actually are victims who unknowingly submit their research, so it is an appropriate term for them

# Problems for the Innocent

---

If we look at PP through a stakeholder lens, the following issues emerge:

## 1. **The innocent author who is duped**

- Pays for service without receiving any of the basic services of academic publishing including constructive feedback through peer review
- May lose status when peers discover that author has published in a PP journal which may have a negative impact on job renewal, tenure and promotion
- May lead to investigation by university employer for unethical publication
- Damage may be long term as PP do not retract or withdraw articles that are accepted.

## Who publishes in PP journals and why? (Two populations and one hypothetical answer for why)

---

1. Some research confirms that the majority of authors come from countries in Asia and Africa (Shen and Bjork, 2015)
2. Increased pressure on world rankings of universities has increased the requirement that scholars publish significantly more which motivates the desire to seek the rapid publication which PP journals promise
3. (Curry and Lillis, 2018) suggest that the dominance of English as the lingua franca of scholarly publishing and citation indexes discriminates against researchers for whom English is a second language
4. Other researches from North America and Europe also knowingly publish in PP journals (Offord, 2018) including evidence from research with over 5000 German authors.

# Two approaches to the problem

---

Responses to PP are of two types or kinds.

# Caveat Emptor

---

Caveat emptor (buyer beware) approaches to PP, is primarily the use of education as a mechanism to inform the uninformed author to the phenomenon of PP and its features.

1. A clear example of this is found in the material produced and distributed by 'Think, check, submit'.
2. Other empirical work provides data on the nature of PP, including information about the owners and promoters of PP.

## Addressing and pursuing PP as businesses committing criminal acts

---

Clear example of this approach – Recently, (2019) the Federal Trade Commission in the United States won a court case against PP, OMICS and their companies. The court imposed a \$50.1 million fine on OMICS.

## References

---

Carroll, C.W. (2016). “Spotting the wolf in sheep’s clothing: Predatory open access publications.” *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, 8(5), 662-664.

Curry, Mary Jane and T. Lillis (2018). “The dangers of English as lingua franca of journals.” *Inside Higher Education*, March 13.

Eriksson, S. and G. Helgesson (2017). “The false academy: Predatory publishing in science and bioethics.” *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy*, 20(2), 163-170.

## References

---

Shen, C. and B-C. Bjork (2015). “Predatory’ open access: A longitudinal study of article volumes and market characteristics.” *BMC Medicine*, 13(230).

Offord, Catherine (2018). “At least 5,000 of the country’s researcher have published their work on questionable platforms, often forking over exorbitant fees, a report finds.” *The Scientist*, July, 18.

*Federal Trade Commission website* (April 3, 2019). “Court rules in FTC’s favor against predatory academic publisher OMICS group; Imposes \$50.1 judgment against defendants that made false claims and hid publishing fees.”

— Thank you! —  
— [publiTationethics.org](http://publiTationethics.org) —



---

Questions or Comments

[poffd@brandonu.ca](mailto:poffd@brandonu.ca)