

Predatory Journals : The Indian Scenario

Sujit Sarkhel

Associate Professor, Institute of Psychiatry, Kolkata

Jeffrey Beall, the librarian in the University of Chicago, compiled a list of scientific open-access journals, which did not perform proper peer-review before publishing articles and would be ready to publish any material as long as the authors paid publication fees. Beall named this category of journals as “predatory journals” and his “list of predatory journals” became popular in the scientific community. It started as a personal effort 10 years back and started gaining popularity¹. However, repeated threats of legal action made Beall withdraw the list from his blog last year.

Many publishers that host suspected predatory journals are based in India. Many of these journals sustain on articles by Indian authors. This is a matter of shame for the Indian scientific community and also tarnishes the credibility of Indian researchers before the international scientific community². A recent investigation by an Indian newspaper revealed that over 300 publishers exist in India who publish hundreds of predatory journals. Most of these journals publish in the fields of medicine, engineering and management. One of the major reasons cited by senior researchers is the weightage put on the number of publications by bodies like the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the

Medical Council of India (MCI) for recruitment and promotion in teaching posts. Very often, it is the number rather than the quality of work that is emphasized. To counter this menace, the UGC recently released a list of “Approved Journals” but it was found that many “predatory journals” had crept in. Subsequently, more than 4000 journals had to be removed from the list³. Recently, the Union Minister for Higher Education has committed to the Parliament his resolve to end the menace of “predatory journals”. While such a move from the Union Government is commendable and bodies like the UGC and MCI make concerted efforts to streamline the list of approved Journals”, the psychiatric community should also make its own humble effort to complement this process. The Indian Psychiatric Society, along with other recognized national societies dealing with mental health and allied sciences, should standardize and publish its own guidelines of ethical publishing and strictly denounce the publishers of “predatory journals” in this field. Apart from drawing up a list of journals in mental health and allied sciences, which follow “ethical publishing practices”, researchers and clinicians should be strongly warned against publishing in “predatory psychiatry journals”.

REFERENCES

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