Predatory Publishers
Jan Odom-Forren, PhD, RN, CPAN, FAAN

DR HOOPER AND I would like to join our colleagues from the International Academy of Nursing Editors (INANE) and highlight the issue of predatory publishing. The term “predatory publishers” was coined by Jeffery Beall, an academic librarian, to describe those publishers who offer fast turnaround—for a price—with minimum or no peer review. The titles of these journals are typically similar to those of well-known journals, and the journals seem to target new authors and researchers. I receive e-mails from these types of publications on a daily basis. They attempt to appear legitimate, but many times the e-mail has incorrect spelling of words, and any attempt to find a home address for the journal proves impossible. Predatory publishing is very different from the ethical and scholarly practice of open access that is offered by reputable publishers. At the 2014 INANE meeting in Portland, ME, the nursing editors present discussed the growing problem and decided to create a collaborative paper to provide information for readers about these predatory publishers who engage in unethical and unscholarly practices. Below is the collaborative paper from the INANE “Predatory Publishing Practices” Collaborative.

The ideas or opinions expressed in this editorial are those solely of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of ASPAN, the Journal, or the Publisher.
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Predatory Publishers: What the Nursing Community Needs to Know
INANE “Predatory Publishing Practices” Collaborative

AS AN UNINTENDED outcome of the effort to expand open access to scholarly material, the publishing world now has to contend with new challenges around what academic librarian and blogger Jeffrey Beall (in his blog Scholarly Open Access, available at http://scholarlyoa.com/) has termed “predatory publishers.” In August 2014, participants at the 33rd Annual Meeting of the International Academy of Nursing Editors (INANE) in Portland, Maine, concerned with the potential for
inadvertent submissions to these journals as well as
the citation of questionable manuscripts, agreed
that it was time to raise awareness and educate
our constituent communities about the potential
detrimental effects of this emerging phenomenon.

Conditions Created by Open Access

Open access publishing is a relatively recent
occurrence with the worthy goal of removing re-
strictions to the online access of peer-reviewed
scholarly research. Although it may have created
the conditions under which these new predatory
publishing practices are flourishing, open access
is not, in itself, the problem. Many highly rigorous,
 scholar and professional journals are exclusively
open access; other journals offer authors a range of
traditional and open access options. These include
options for authors or their funders to pay article
processing charges for immediate open access
and various levels of delayed public access for spe-
cific types of articles. As it has taken hold, the open
access movement has significantly altered the con-
ventional financial model of many journals. While
journal owners historically relied entirely on jour-
nal subscriptions and content licenses or advertise-
ments as their revenue base, most open access
publishing options are fee-based. Many research
granting bodies have strongly advocated for unre-
stricted access to the findings from studies they
fund, and some have willingly funded open access
publication costs as a means to make results
widely and rapidly available. As a result, publishing
has been influenced by for-profit enterprise in
ways previously unimagined by scholars. The win-
dow of commercial opportunity has been flung
wide open, and in many cases thrown completely
off its hinges.

Beyond the open access options being adopted by
mainstream publishers, the ease of digital publish-
ing and exploitation of this new publishing business
model has led to a myriad of new journals, each
actively competing for authors and revenue. Some
of these new journals, including those introduced
by conventional commercial and professional soci-
ety publishers to augment their journal portfolios,
apply the same rigorous peer review practices
and standards of scholarly excellence we have
come to rely on as consistent with advances in pro-
fessional disciplines such as nursing. However,

across every academic field, professional discipline,
and geographic jurisdiction, we are also seeing the
emergence of a new species of publisher whose
practices reveal little evidence of editorial and pub-
lishing quality. Instead, with profit as the driving
force, these "predatory" publishers engage in a
range of disturbingly unethical and unscholarly
practices.

Predatory Motivations and Practices

Typical practices of predatory publishers include
promises of rapid review and acceptance for
publication, minimal to non-existent review pro-
cesses, a fabricated editorial board, and mimicry
of legitimate journal titles. These publishers often
send out flattering individualized email solicita-
tions to potential authors inviting them to submit
manuscripts or serve as "guest editors" for their
journals. Guest editing typically involves having
"editors” invite their own collaborators and col-
leagues to submit papers for a special issue—for
a fee. There are examples of eminent names being
listed as an “honorary editor” or members of the
“editorial board,” where these scholars were un-
aware of the existence of the journal or the use
of their name in that manner.

Conversely, the named “journal editor” may be
someone with no qualifications or credibility in
the field, and may simultaneously administer a
suite of journals in a wide range of fields in an effort
to attract as many submissions from author-
customers as possible. In the rush to provide rapid
review and acceptance for publication, these edi-
tors may review submissions single-handedly, or
rely on a single employee “peer” to bless the manu-
script and deem it publishable. The result is a “re-
view process” unfettered by actual expert critique.
This practice is sometimes evident in the eventual
published document, with the date of submission,
review and acceptance all occurring in close
proximity.

Many predatory publishers also deploy unscrupu-
los marketing practices to seduce unsuspecting
potential authors, such as inventing journal titles
that are similar to those of well-known and repu-
table journals, or using logos deceivingly like those
of conventional publishing houses. Operating
within the global environment, these journals
tend to establish administrative home bases that
afford protection from legal repercussions that could arise from such practices as copyright violation. The goal of such creative strategies is always the appearance of authenticity, thereby luring unwary authors to presume credibility.

When the driving motivation of a journal is profit, the focus is fixed on pleasing the author as the primary source of revenue. Predatory publishers therefore target senior scholars to build the journal’s credibility and to help attract unsuspecting or naive authors, who may fall prey to easy flattery. Other targets include those whose academic pressures to publish may blind them to the nefarious nature of what allows a journal to bring a manuscript to print in record time. Unfortunately, aspiring authors caught up in the promise of rapid publication may unwittingly find that (a) their career progress is tainted by the lack of credibility of their selected publishing venues, (b) they are liable for unexpected additional fees once their paper has been published, or (c) their previously published papers suddenly cease to exist, or reside in legal limbo, with the copyright signed away to a non-existent publisher and inaccessible through established search mechanisms, because contractual arrangements for these publications may be unenforceable.

We see a significant collective harm for the body of published scholarly nursing literature because concern about quality inherently reduces the profit margin in this predatory model of doing business. Although we have come to trust the practices and processes of our various scholarly and professional publications for the quality and credibility of the corpus of disciplinary knowledge, the new and unmanaged proliferation of pseudo-scholarly activity could significantly flood the market with journals and articles that discredit the profession. In healthcare, this threat is even more serious, as the pseudo-science and poor scholarship published by predatory journals could conceivably result in harm to patients and the health information seeking public.

**The INANE Call to Action**

The INANE community, representing editors of credible and reputable nursing journals, believes that it is imperative to inform nurses of the harm

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**Table 1. Guidelines for Evaluating the Integrity of a Journal**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>What to look for</th>
<th>Red flags</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is the Editor in charge of journal content?</td>
<td>• A person who has a reputation in the discipline.</td>
<td>• You cannot find any evidence of the Editor’s standing in the discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Direct contact information for the Editor is provided.</td>
<td>• There is no contact information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the journal’s process for assuring quality of content?</td>
<td>• A clear description of the process for review of manuscripts prior to publication is stated.</td>
<td>• A promise of rapid review and publication (quality reviews take time).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The names and duties of editorial advisory or review panel members are listed.</td>
<td>• Mystification of those who are involved in the review process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the journal have sound business and publishing practices?</td>
<td>• The journal is a member of COPE.</td>
<td>• The publisher/journal is on Beall’s List at Scholarly OA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The journal is in the INANE/NA&amp;E Directory of Nursing Journals.</td>
<td>• The journal name or other information is suspiciously like another journal.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Information about author processing charges (APC), if any, is clear and easily accessible.</td>
<td>• The journal/publisher solicits manuscripts using excessively complimentary emails.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If the journal shows an impact factor, it is verifiable in the Journal Citation Reports (Web of Science).</td>
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inherent in this new hazard that has arrived in the
publishing scene. We encourage nursing authors
to use Beall’s list of predatory publishers at Schol-
larly Open Access (http://scholarlyoa.com/about/)
as a reliable resource. His approaches and
methods, including dynamic monitoring of the
publishing world for this purpose and a willing-
ness to reconsider and revise any listing found to
be in error or misleading, make Beall’s site
extremely helpful for nurses who now need to
ensure the credibility of the journals to which
they entrust their manuscripts or become other-
wise involved. At the same time, Beall would be
the first to acknowledge the impossibility of keep-
ing up with all of the emerging new journals. We
therefore also encourage potential authors to
consult the Directory of Nursing Journals (http://
nursingeditors.com/journalsdirectory/), a collabo-
rative effort between INANE and this publication,
Nurse Author & Editor, for journals that have
been reviewed and vetted within our community,
and to be vigilat for the hallmarks of predatory
practices. A third useful resource is Thomas Long’s
blog on Nursing Writing (http://nursingwriting.
wordpress.com/), which includes a compilation
of recent reports on predatory open-access jour-
nals and scholarly conference scams. Another
potentially useful resource may be the Directory of
Open Access Journals (http://doaj.org/application/
new), which is working to strengthen its approvals
process based on more strict criteria.

We will maintain information on this topic on
INANE’s website (see http://nursingeditors.com/
inane-initiatives/openaccess-editorial-standards/
editorials-published-open-accesseditorial-standards/) as an ongoing reference for our members. Finally, we offer in the accompanying table a brief compila-
tion of considerations and “red flags” summa-
rized from internationally reputable organizations concerned with publications ethics. These sources too will undoubtedly continue to evolve over time.

In writing this statement, the INANE community
hopes to encourage educators, mentors, scholars,
and clinical practitioners to join in a campaign to
help our colleagues understand emerging hazards
on the path to publication. We encourage those
who oversee institutional promotion and advance-
ment processes to ensure that (a) their members
are well mentored with respect to the publication
records they are building, and (b) that their review
committees have the knowledge required for fair
assessment of work across the spectrum of publi-
cation modalities. Above all, we seek to serve the
emerging science, knowledge sharing, and author-
ial careers of our discipline as well as possible
by ensuring that nurses are making wise publish-
ishing choices.

INANE members are committed to sustaining the
high standards we have come to expect in the
published body of nursing knowledge, across the
full spectrum of theorizing and philosophizing, sci-
cence and evidence building, clinical applications,
education, leadership, social advocacy and policy
engagement, even as we embrace the new possi-
bilities for publishing in the digital universe.
Open access is both an exciting opportunity and
an intriguingly disruptive force in the publishing
world. It is unfortunate that it has been exploited
in this predatory manner. However, by translating
our best nursing health promotion and disease pre-
vention wisdom to the publishing domain, we can
help keep our colleagues and their important ideas
safe from harm.

Let’s spread the word and disarm the threat
together.

Acknowledgement

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