

Comments on 'Predatory journals; a nuisance or a threat to research integrity?'

Hiwa O Abdullah^{1,2}, Berun A Abdalla^{1,2}, Fahmi H Kakamad^{*1,2,3}

¹Smart Health Tower, Madam Mitterrand Street, Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan, Iraq

²Kscien Organization, Hamdi Street, Azadi Mall, Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan, Iraq

³College of Medicine, University of Sulaimani, Madam Mitterrand Street, Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan, Iraq

*Corresponding author email fahmi.hussein@univsul.edu.iq

Keywords predatory journals, threat to research

For referencing Abdullah HO, Abdalla BA, Kakamad F. Comments on 'Predatory journals; a nuisance or a threat to research integrity?'. *Journal of Wound Management*. 2024;25(3):117.

DOI <https://doi.org/10.35279/jowm2024.25.03.09>

Submitted 28 July 2024, Accepted 23 September 2024

Dear Editor,

We read Gethin's editorial regarding the risks associated with predatory journals with interest. The article addresses the problem of such journals, which actively solicit manuscript submissions through continually sending emails. Predatory journals are characterised by their deceptive practices aimed at financial gain and their absence of rigorous editorial standards, resulting in the publication of substandard research. Scholars refer to various checklists to circumvent these predatory journals; however, the article suggests that these checklists frequently lack adequate guidance. Authors are encouraged to utilise resources such as the *Think Check Submit* and *Think Check Attend* websites to identify reputable publishers and conferences.¹ Gethin emphasised two significant points that may require further clarification or additional comments. The article noted that predatory practices might pose challenges primarily for less experienced academics or those facing pressure to publish rather than for professional scholars. However, with the ongoing evolution of predatory journals' tactics, their impact may now affect all researchers indiscriminately. These journals have recently advanced their practices, making it increasingly challenging to distinguish between genuine and predatory ones. Predatory journals have started designing professional websites, securing indexing in reputable databases, and even getting impact factors. They may obtain sponsorship from legitimate organisations, offer free publication services with hidden motives, falsify archives, and implement stringent plagiarism checks.^{2,3} For this reason, the threat caused by predatory practices extends beyond a specific group of scholars and is a concern for all researchers.

Secondly, Gethin notably discussed how the available checklists often lack quantitative and qualitative guidance and fail to provide clear criteria for identifying predatory journals.¹ Scholars must know how to assess a journal's reputation or legitimacy. Gethin suggested using the *Think Check Submit* website to evaluate journals. However, as previously noted, novice researchers or inexperienced scholars might lack the necessary knowledge to use this tool effectively. Additionally, modern predatory journals may still be able to bypass these checklists.^{1,4} The strategy developed by John Bohannon, known as the 'Sting Operation' and practiced

by Kscien List, may offer a viable alternative for assessing a journal's legitimacy. This method involves submitting bogus manuscripts with deliberate errors to a journal suspected of predatory practices to determine whether it accepts fraudulent submissions. This technique could be an evidence-based practice to evaluate whether a journal conducts proper peer review.^{4,5}

This paper highlights predatory journals' issues for the scientific community and literature. However, it is also essential to be aware of predatory journals' modern tactics and the sting operation technique to expose these practices.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All the authors are active members of the Kscien Organization for Scientific Research.

FUNDING

The authors received no funding for this study.

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