Predatory Publishing: Hidden Pitfalls with High Costs
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What is a Predatory Publisher
With little or no actual services or scholarly review being performed the sole purpose of these publishers is to make money through fraudulently charging authors fees, often guised as processing or open access fees.

However, most publishers that charge fees are not predatory therefore this can not be the sole characteristic of a predatory publisher.

Characteristics of a Predatory Publisher
- **LITTLE OR NO** publication services: Charge processing fees for little or no publication services, meaning:
  - Limited or no editing of content
  - Does not follow peer-review process or fraudulently mimics peer-review
- **FALSE CLAMS** makes false claims about their publishing practices.
- Publishes on a rapid timeline: too few days/weeks between acceptance, editorial review, and publication.
- **Has no intention of archiving content in perpetuity.**

Red Flags
These red flags can help you know what to watch out for!
- Copycat titles that resemble well known and reputable journals
- Includes out of scope articles
- Heavy solicitation for submissions and editorial board membership
- Editorial board members don’t exist or didn’t volunteer
- Poor grammar & punctuation in articles, websites and emails
- Recent start dates combined with a large number of journals covering an impractical range of topics
- Unreasonably fast “peer review” process
- Lacking adequate contact information, some examples:
  - Only one person listed on website,
  - Use of P.O. box or,
  - Address belongs to another business/person
- The website lacks information that would illustrate why the publisher is qualified to be producing content.
- Questionable quality for journals already published
- Irregular publication schedules
- Inconsistent number of articles per issue

Predatory vs. Low Quality
Often individuals with good intentions start journals but do not follow industry standards. These journals are not attempting to take advantage of authors, like predatory journals, but do have poor quality control.

Perpetuating “Bad Science”
Publishing content that has not been vetted is bad for the author and bad for the institution. Future access becomes an issue if the journal has loose archiving practices. This can cause the author to lose control over their work and at worst it can be lost forever if the journal ceases to exist.

Protect Yourself

1. **Use a Whitelist!**
   White lists have vetted journals using publication quality and standards.
   The Association of Vision Science Librarians (AVSL) has created the **Whitelist for Vision Science Journals** covering optometry, ophthalmology, and vision science. See: AVSL Whitelist for Vision Science Journals, at avsl.org/resources/whitelist

2. **Think. Check. Submit.**
   Think. Check. Submit is a checklist to help determine the right journal for your research. It helps you know what types of questions to ask regarding a journal’s quality. Many are similar to the red flags that we have identified here. This tool draws from:
   - Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)
   - Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association, and
   - The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)
   - And additional internationally recognized vetted lists of journals.

WHO EMBRACED THE FAKE?
Journals deemed predatory were much more likely to accept a fake, subpar candidate as an editor.

![Bar chart showing the percentage of journals that accepted fake authors](chart.png)