

# How to detect a potential predatory/deceptive journal



Below is an evidence-based<sup>1,2</sup> list of the most important features of suspected biomedical predatory journals. Some of these items may indicate that a journal is of lower quality, but not predatory. In both cases (potential predatory or lower quality), we recommend that you avoid submission.

## Is the journal potential predatory/deceptive?

**STEP 1:** Consider the following as the most salient indicators of potential predatory journals (major red flags in order of most troubling to less troubling). **Any 1 or more checks here would warrant no submission to the journal.**



- Article processing/publication charge (APC) is very low (e.g., < \$150 USD);
- The journal promotes a fake impact factor on its website, e.g. Index Copernicus Value (ICV);
- The journal is open access but it is not listed in the membership Directory of Open Access Journals (check [here](#));
- The journal is not a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (check [here](#)).

**STEP 2:** Now you are examining the journal to decide between (1) lower quality, or (2) reasonable to submit to. Take a look at the following lists and assessments, ordered from most troubling to less troubling.

**If you can check off 2 or more criteria, we recommend you avoid submission:**

### Website and Contact Information



- The journal does not have an impact factor on Journal Citations Reports (JCR). Check [here](#) (uOttawa library subscription required);
- Scope of the journal's topics includes non-biomedical topics alongside biomedical topics;
- Website includes spelling and/or grammatical errors;
- Images are distorted/fuzzy;
- Homepage language targets authors, e.g.: inviting submissions or promising rapid publication;
- Contact email address is non-professional and non-journal affiliated, e.g., @gmail.com or @yahoo.com.

### Review Process



- There is no description of the manuscript handling process, e.g. the website asks that you submit your manuscript but does not describe how the manuscript will continue on to peer review or how many reviewers will see your work;
- Manuscripts must be submitted via a personal email rather than through an editorial management system where you would log in with a username and password;

### Article Processing (information often found in the policies section of the journal or publisher website)



- Journals claiming to be open access either retain copyright of published research, or fail to mention copyright or creative commons licenses;
- There is no retraction policy;
- There is no information on whether and how journal content will be digitally preserved.

If you are unsure about the quality of a journal or publisher, talk to a librarian at your institution and take a look at the resources on our website: [ohri.ca/journalology](http://ohri.ca/journalology).

#### Sources:

1. Cobey KD, Lalu MM, Skidmore B, Ahmadzai N, Grudniewicz A, Moher D. What is a predatory journal? A scoping review [version 2; referees: 3 approved]. F1000Research. 2018;7:1001. doi: 10.12688/f1000research.15256.2.

2. Shamseer L, Moher D, Maduekwe O, Turner L, Barbour V, Burch R, Clark J, Galipeau J, Roberts J, Shea BJ. Potential predatory and legitimate biomedical journals: can you tell the difference? A cross-sectional comparison. BMC medicine. 2017 Dec;15(1):28. doi: 10.1186/s12916-017-0785-9

