DILEMMAS

doi: 10.5455/medarh.2022.76.234-238
MED ARCH. 2022 JUN; 76(3): 234-238
RECEIVED: JUL 07, 2021
ACCEPTED: JUL 12, 2022

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Instead of the Letter to the Editor–Dilemma: Is a New Form of Blackmail Emerging in the World of Scientific Journals Publishing?

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Recently, the Editor-in-Chief of the journal Medical Archives (Med Arch - www.medarch.org) received an SMS message (Figure 1) from the alleged “BEALL’S LIST TEAM” warning the Editor Izet Masic that the journal Medical Archives has no right to “collect” 100 euros in advance from the authors, which the author must pay when submitting the paper in order for the article to be included in the administrative process, and that the amount of the publication fee of 500 euros is high for a journal like Medical Archives, which belongs to the Q3 journals categorized by SCOPUS and SCImago Rank. If this SMS message is not an example of intentional misrepresentation, it may have serious consequences for Medical Archives.

The creation of various “negative” or “black” lists of people or organizations that should be eliminated in one way or another is a well-known method used by ruling elites in many societies and civilizations to preserve their own positions and promote their own interests. The one who makes the list decides who is put on such a list, and those who are on the list have no way of objecting.

Nowadays, when a person’s scientific contribution is primarily measured by the success of the promotion of his/her works (the publication of works in journals that enjoy a higher reputation, i.e. have a higher impact factor and are published by prestigious publishers, geometrically increases the chances of being cited), the inclusion of a journal in a kind of “negative list”, i.e. labeling it as “predatory”, means the imminent end for such a journal. It is clear that none of the scientists will send their work to a journal that is on the “predatory” list.

The message that reached the Editor from the alleged “BEALL’S LIST TEAM” indirectly threatens that the journal Medical Archives will be placed on the list of “predatory” journals if it does not abolish or decrease its Article Processing Charges (APC). The request to abolish or decrease the APC is based on the claim that Medical Archives does not provide sufficient quality for the amount it charges its authors. In short, the Editor of Medical Archives was blackmailed into abolishing or lowering the APC if he wanted his journal not to appear on the list of “predatory” journals.

Medical Archives is a journal that was created by the tremendous efforts of the Editor-in-Chief and other enthusiasts from the Balkans in order to improve the quality of scientific research in the region and to give authors from the region the opportunity to present their work to a wider audience, whereby the journal is almost exclusively financed by Article Processing Charges and then by Article Publication Charges. It is thanks to this fact that Medical Archives has maintained its independence and integrity, and is not subject to the influence of interested commercial companies from the region. Abolishing or decreasing this sole form of funding would also mean the end of the journal. So, according to the alleged message from “BEALL’S LIST TEAM”, Medical Archives is between Scylla and Charybdis. This is not the case with other journals that are supported by powerful financial organizations and also charge Article Processing Charges and Article Publication Charges (some of them are listed below this text).

This text is published in the hope that the authors (if they really exist) of the message addressed to the Editor-in-Chief of the Medical Archives will realize that they are in the wrong and withdraw their demand for the abolition or
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... have not signed the author contribution and Copyright Assignment Form, which are mandatory documents).

Attached to this text are some formatted contributions from this year that were later withdrawn for unexplained reasons. The authors of these contributions are not penalised by COPE or other institutions for their unethical behavior. It can not be done. Beall and his team did not take this into account when compiling the list.

The author of this text is one of the most distinguished and influential scientists in the world in the field of scientific editing, with experience in editing since the student days of 1975/1976 (founder and editor of a scientific journal for 15 medical faculties in the former Yugoslavia), Editor-in-Chief of 5 indexed biomedical journals, former member of the Council of the European Association of Science Editors (EASE), author of numerous books and papers (1-37), especially in the field of scientific editing. One of these is the book edited by Mohammad M. Shojaa, Anastasia Arychnyna, Marios Loukas, Anthony V. D’antony, Sandra M. Buerger and associates (A Guide to the Scientific Career - Virtues Communication, Research, and Academic Writing, Wiley Blackwell, London, 2019, 792 pages) (3), in which Chapter 19 is authored by Izet Masic (Plagiarism and How to Avoid it) and Chapter 41 is authored by Jeffrey Beall (Salarly Open-Access Publishing) and we both know each other perfectly and know who is who in science editing.

Examples of medical journals that charge both Article Processing Charges and Article Publication Charges:

- Int. Journal of Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics, Publisher Dustri-Verlag, APC – 70 Euros, https://www.dustri.com/nc/journals-in-english/mag/int-journal-of-clinical-pharmacology-and-therapeutics.html
- Clinical Nephrology, Publisher Dustri-Verlag, APC – 70 Euro, https://www.dustri.com/nc/journals-in-english/mag/clinical-nephrology.html
- Israel Medical Association Journal, Publisher Israel Medical Association, APC – 25 $, https://www.ima.org.il/medicineimaj/staticpage.aspx?page=6815
- PLOS One; Publisher: Public Library of Science. California, U.S.- Research articles: 2,100 $; All other articles: $1,805. PLOS Medicine Research articles: $5,300. https://plos.org/publish/fees/

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Instead of the Letter to the Editor–Dilemma: Is a New Form of Blackmail Emerging in the World of Scientific Journals Publishing?

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doi: 10.5455/medarh.2019.73.374-377

Introduction: Demographic studies showed that the number of authors, institutions, and publications, as well as the number of citations per publication, is increasing. This increase in scientific publications has led to increased research and development in the field of scientific publishing. However, scientific publishing is facing a number of challenges, such as plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and harassment. Scientific publishing is also facing a number of ethical issues, such as authorship disputes, data fabrication, and data manipulation.

Methods: The study was conducted by analyzing the data from 50 scientific journals in the field of medical sciences. The data was collected through a survey of the journal’s website and the publication of the journal. The data was analyzed using the chi-square test and the Wilcoxon rank sum test.

Results: The results showed that the number of publications and the number of citations per publication were significantly higher in the journals that had a higher impact factor. The results also showed that the number of authors and the number of institutions were significantly higher in the journals that had a higher impact factor. The results also showed that the number of ethical issues was significantly higher in the journals that had a lower impact factor.

Conclusion: The results of this study showed that scientific publishing is facing a number of challenges and ethical issues. These challenges and ethical issues need to be addressed in order to ensure the quality of scientific publishing.

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Dilemmas in Med Arch. 2022 Jun; 76(3): 234-238

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