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ACADEMIC PHARMACY SECTION SPECIAL ISSUE

WORKING GROUP UPDATE OF ACADEMIC PHARMACY SECTION

Taking the mystery out of choosing a journal for publishing your manuscript

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Abstract

Determining the most appropriate journal for manuscript submission for pharmacy and pharmaceutical science researchers can be difficult for young and experienced faculty alike and may be the most crucial step to promote successful publication. Although journals are ranked using traditional citation metrics such as the journal impact factor (JIF) and more novel altmetrics, researchers need to consider and prioritise various factors, such as the journal's aims and scope, intended audience members, and ease of access to promote readership and further studies. Authors also need to be mindful of predatory journals, realistic expectations for acceptance and rejection, as well as promotion and tenure guidelines. The purpose of this article is to give direction and provide resources for academic pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists around the world on how to select an appropriate journal for their work to promote a successful publication experience.

Introduction

Publication is the foundation of scholarship that enables researchers to share new knowledge and allows others to verify the data, replicate the published findings, as well as build upon the findings with further research to advance science (Cech *et al*., 2003). All members of the scientific community share the responsibility to participate and benefit from the publication system, and the demands are higher for members of academia. Many universities worldwide assess biomedical sciences faculty for tenure and promotion based on a traditional criterion, including a number of peer-reviewed publications, authorship order, journal impact, grant funding, and national or international reputation. In a cross-sectional study that reviewed the promotion and tenure guidelines for biomedical science faculty members internationally, 28% and 48% of the guidelines mentioned journal impact factor, and national/international reputation, respectively (Rice *et al.,* 2020). These numbers may vary per region, considering that most of the guidelines included in the study were from North America, Europe, and Asia. However, challenges to selecting the most appropriate journal include the daunting task of choosing between the sheer number of journals available, deciphering the meaning of a variety of different metrics used to compare journals, evaluating the balance between meeting an individual's goals for publication, such as prestige, target audience, and feasibility, as well as being cautious of the presence of predatory journals. Attention to detail and perseverance is key, as the average manuscript is rejected three to six times before publication (Huisman & Smits, 2017). As rejection rates are reportedly 80 to 95% for more prestigious journals, authors need to be prepared for rejection or numerous comments to address (Khadilkar, 2018). The aim of this article is to give direction and provide resources for academic pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists around the world on how to select an appropriate journal for their work to promote a successful publication experience.

Journal citation metrics

Journal impact factor

Traditionally, journals can be ranked based on several citation metrics, such as the author citation index, journal impact factor, and journal and author Hirsch index. Currently, newer metrics are being used, such as the K-index and alternative metrics. As shown in Figure 1, the annual journal impact factor (JIF) is calculated by dividing the cumulative number of citations to articles published in the prior two years by the number of articles published in that journal during the previous two years (Katritsis, 2019).

Journal X published 100 citable articles in 2018 and these received 408 subsequent citations.

Journal X published 150 citable articles in 2019 and these received 592 subsequent citations.

Formula:

$$\frac{\text{(\# of citations to articles published in 2018) + (\# of citations to articles published in 2019)}}{\text{(\# of citable articles published in 2018 + \# of citable articles published in 2019)}}$$

408 + 592 / 100 + 150 = 4 Journal impact factor = 4

Figure 1: Example of how to calculate the journal impact factor

Initially created to help librarians prioritise their purchases of journals in 1955, the JIF led to the creation of the prestigious journal rankings. It is now calculated by Clarivate Analytics and published annually in Journal Citation Reports (JCR), which is available through the Clarivate Web of Science through an institutional subscription. This information is also available on Scopus, which also requires a subscription service and uses a three-year window instead to create a CiteScore. Not all journals are assessed with an impact factor as this requires the journal to apply for ranking and that the application be accepted. Journals that do usually make the JIF available on their websites (Table I).

Table I: Resources for evaluating and selecting an appropriate journal for publication

Content	Resource	Website
Journal impact factor	Clarivate Web of Science†	https://clarivate.com/webofsciencegroup/solutions/journal-citation-reports/
CiteScore	Scopus	https://www.scopus.com/sources
H-index & journal selection	Scopus Scimago	www.scimagojr.com
K-index	Clarivate Web of Science†	https://clarivate.com/webofsciencegroup/solutions/journal-citation-reports/
Altmetrics	Altmetric†	https://www.altmetric.com/audience/researchers/
Altmetrics	Plum Analytics†	https://plumanalytics.com/
Altmetrics	Lagotto†	https://www.lagotto.io/
Altmetrics	ImpactStory†	https://profiles.impactstory.org/
Journal selection	The Biosemantics Group Journal/Author Name Estimator (JANE)	https://jane.biosemantics.org/
Predatory journals	Beall's List	https://beallslist.net/

†Institutional subscription required

H-Index

In 2005, the Hirsch index (H-index) was developed to evaluate not only the impact but also the productivity of an author (Hirsch, 2005). It utilises the citation index but calculates the number of publications with a citation number greater than or equal to H. For example, an H-index of 30 indicates that the author has 30 publications with at least 30 citations from each article. This would indicate productivity due to the publication of many works that are cited by others, as opposed to one major work with 900 citations, for example. The H-index is available on Scopus Scimago, a publicly available website. This metric can also be applied to journals, where H number of articles have

been cited at least H number of times over a specific time frame, such as two or five years.

K-index

A more recently developed metric, the K-index, attempts to identify the importance of an author's body of work rather than just considering the raw citation numbers from the H-index. It is calculated by the number of publications citing the author that have at least K citations each (Kaptay, 2020). This means that subsequent researchers build upon the work of the original author and then their work becomes highly cited. This infers that the original author's work made a significant lasting impact and spawned advancement in the field. This newer metric has also been shown to correlate better with scientific prizes and awards, such as the Nobel Peace Prize (Ayaz & Masood, 2020; Kinouchi & Cardoso, 2018).

Alternative metrics

Recently, with the rapid growth of social media and accessibility to technology, researchers have been using social networks and other platforms to share and access the scientific information. This has led to the creation of alternative metrics, also known as altmetrics, which assess the immediate social impact of an article based on how it circulates through the internet (Garcia-Villar, 2021). Attention sources may include social media (Twitter, Facebook), reference managers (Zotero, Elsevier's Mendeley), blogs, and open-access repositories (Figshare). Altmetric providers such as the company Altmetric, Plum Analytics, Lagotto, and ImpactStory create an attention score by analysing the number of interactions such as retweets, likes, shares, bookmarks, mentions, blog posts, comments, clicks, views, and downloads (Table I). Despite being non-traditional, altmetrics provide an opportunity to assess the immediate social impact of an article using the most current online measurements.

Implications for promotion and tenure

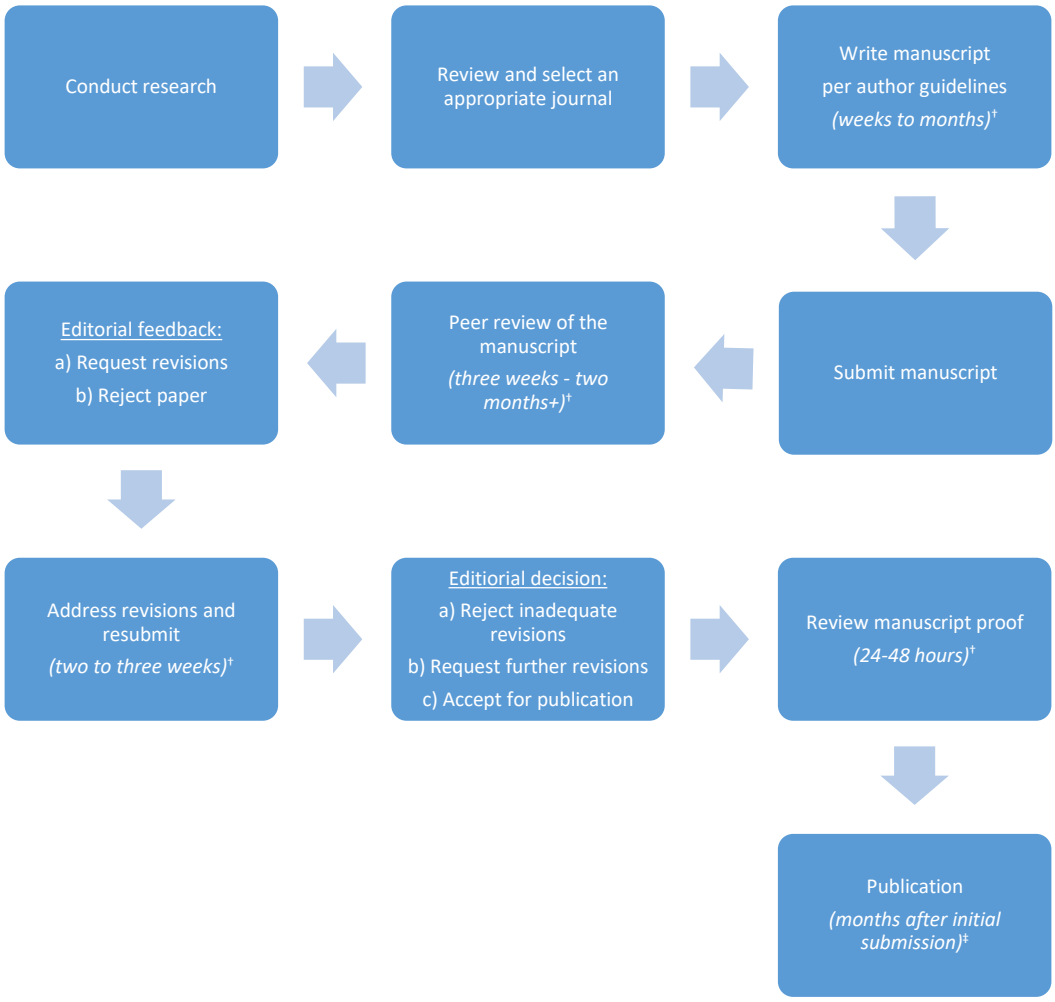
Promotion, tenure, and grant decisions are made in part on the value of one's scholarly work, and one's scholarship is often assessed by its impact based on these metrics. For example, institutional promotion and tenure guidelines may include the achievement of a specific number of cumulative citations of an educator's publications and/or look for those publications to be primarily in journals with high impact factor ratings. However, there has been controversy over the importance and accurate representation of an article based on these measures alone, as the number of citations does not equate to research quality (Paulus, Cruz, & Krach, 2018). For instance, JIF only considers the first two years after a study has been published, which disregards citations of more recently published articles that cite work beyond the past two years (Katritsis, 2019).

There has been a lack of transparency in these calculations, and editorials and letters are considered non-citable items. The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment even announced a need to shift away from using JIF and develop more reliable measures of impact and quality (Cagan, 2013). It is crucial to recall that the purpose of the publication is to advance science, and when considering what journal to publish in, think about those who will benefit from the research rather than journal prestige alone.

Journal selection

Given that the main goal of publishing research is to share new knowledge with those who will most benefit, selecting the appropriate journal is the first step in the publication process (Figure 2).

Journal selection may be made prior to manuscript preparation so that authors can target the journal's aims and write a paper taking into consideration the authorship guidelines such as word count and a number of tables and figures. However, this may limit the author's free writing and content presentation quality (Shokraneh *et al.,* 2012). An author may also consider selecting a journal after drafting the manuscript, but this will usually require reformatting the manuscript to meet the journal requirements and take additional time. Often, authors rely on journals that they read or are known within their field; however, limiting the options to familiar journals may result in missing the most appropriate target audience. For instance, pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists do not necessarily have to limit their journal selections to be discipline-specific, as their work may benefit a broader audience than their specific field. Consider the intended aims, scope, and audience of the manuscript and whether those may suit a general medical, educational, or specialist journal. For example, a paper describing research that improved professional identity formation in pharmacy students may provide a method for the same in medical students, and it would be appropriate to submit that manuscript to the journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges, Academic Medicine. In addition, early career faculty may become frustrated when rejected from higher impact journals.



† Time frames provided are estimates as the publication process varies; ‡ Time frames for online journals or open access are often quicker

Figure 2: The journal publication process

One good starting place to expand journal options is the Journal / Author Name Estimator (JANE) website (Table I). To utilise this freely accessible website, simply enter keywords or an abstract / summary of the research, and JANE will retrieve a long list of journals that might be suitable. It provides information about the influence of the articles in the journal based on relative citations over the past five years, as well as links to similar sample articles. Another source to identify appropriate journals is Scopus Scimago. Besides providing information about a journal's H-index, this source can search for journals based on subject areas and sub-categories. Table II provides a list of journals with descriptors separated by country of origin and was developed as a product of the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) academic section educator development working group subcommittee focusing on Objective 4: Promoting scholarship in pharmaceutical education. The goal was to make educators aware of the wide variety of journals available for publications related to pharmaceutical education and research.

Table II contains a number of other factors that authors should consider when choosing a journal to submit their manuscript, such as online, open, or Health Internetwork Access to Research Initiative (HINARI) access. Traditionally, journals were published in printed format which resulted in long wait times from submission to publication. The availability of electronic publication and early access to articles online has reduced the time to share research results. Selecting the traditional publication option usually limits the access to articles to those who either pay for the journal or have free access through institutional subscriptions.

Table II: Comparison of journals for pharmacy and pharmaceutical science researchers

Journal and website	Country	Frequency	Aims and scope	Article processing charges	Online access only	Open access	Publisher	Indexing	
								Medline/ Pubmed	HINARI
Africa									
African Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology https://academicjournals.org/journal/AJPP	Nigeria	Monthly	Drug delivery systems and composition, medication dispensation and management	Manuscript handling fee for AJPP is $600 USD	NS†	Yes	Academic Journals	Yes	No
Tropical Journal of Pharmaceutical Research https://www.tjpr.org/home/	Nigeria	Monthly	Pharmaceutical sciences and related disciplines	$300 USD for regular processing; $600 USD for fast-track processing	Yes	Yes	Pharmacotherapy Group	Yes	Yes
Asia									
Asian Journal of Pharmaceutical and Clinical Research https://innovareacademics.in/journals/index.php/ajpcr	India	Monthly	Pharmaceutical sciences and clinical research	Author registration Rs 1500/ $100 USD	Yes	Yes	Innovare Academic Sciences	Yes	Yes
Asian Journal of Pharmaceutical Education and Research https://ajper.com/	India	Quarterly	Pharmaceutical sciences and research	Nominal Cost Rs 2000/ $60 USD	NS†	Yes	Sapience Bioanalytical Research Lab	NS†	No
Journal of Research in Pharmacy Practice (JRPP) http://www.jrpp.net/	Iran	Quarterly	Evidence-based drug-related medical researches	$400 USD; the editorial team can request a discount for low and middle income countries (LMICs)	No	Yes	Wolters Kluwer Health | Medknow	Yes	Yes
Journal of Asian Association of Schools of Pharmacy https://www.aaspjournal.org/	Japan	NS†	Pharmacy education, pharmacy practice, pharmaceutics, etc.	NS†	NS†	NS†	Asian Association of Schools of Pharmacy	No	Yes
Australia									
Australian Journal of Pharmacy https://ajp.com.au/	Australia	Monthly	Pharmacy news, views, and education	NS†	No	NS†	Australian Pharmaceutical Publishing Company Ltd	NS†	Yes
Australian Prescriber https://www.nps.org.au/australian-prescriber	Australia	Bi-monthly	Drugs and therapeutics	NS†	Yes	Yes	National Prescribing Service	Yes	Yes
Nanotheranostics https://www.aaspjournal.org/	Australia	Quarterly	Theranostics in the	Free	Yes	Yes	Ivyspring International Publisher	Yes	No

Journal and website	Country	Frequency	Aims and scope	Article processing charges	Online access only	Open access	Publisher	Indexing	
								Medline/ Pubmed	HINARI
			nanotechnology space						
Theranostics https://www.thno.org/	Australia	Bi-monthly	Diagnostic and therapeutic molecular and nanomedicine	NS[†]	Yes	Yes	Ivyspring International Publisher	Yes	Yes
Europe									
European Journal of Hospital Pharmacy https://ejhp.bmj.com/	England	Bi-monthly	Practical and innovative research of hospital pharmacists	Traditional Publishing is free; Open Access Cost: 2200 GBP; 100% APC waived for countries on list at https://authors.bmj.com/open-access/fees-discounts/	No	Yes	BMJ Journals	Yes	Yes
Pharmacy Education (by FIP) http://pharmacyeducation.fip.org/pharmacyeducation	England	NS[†]	Pharmacy and pharmaceutical related education, training, and workforce development	Free	Yes	Yes	International Pharmaceutical Federation	Yes	No
The Pharmaceutical Journal https://www.pharmaceutical-journal.com/publications/the-pharmaceutical-journal/	England	NS[†]	Drugs, pharmacy practice, medicines use and healthcare policy	NS[†]	Yes	NS[†]	Pharmaceutical Press	NS[†]	No
International Journal of Clinical Pharmacy (IJCP) https://www.springer.com/journal/11096	Netherlands	Bi-monthly	Clinical pharmacy practice	$3390 USD/2690 euros for open-access publishing; no charges for traditional publishing model	No	Yes	Springer	Yes	Yes
International Journal of Pharmacy Practice (IJPP) https://academic.oup.com/ijpp	Scotland	Bi-monthly	Pharmacy, medicines, and healthcare	NS[†]	No	Yes	Oxford University Press	Yes	No
Journal of Pharmaceutical Health Services Research https://academic.oup.com/jphsr	United Kingdom	Quarterly	Health services research related to pharmaceuticals	$2,720 USD/2,220 euros for open-access license	No	Yes	Oxford University Press	NS[†]	No

Journal and website	Country	Frequency	Aims and scope	Article processing charges	Online access only	Open access	Publisher	Indexing	
								Medline/ Pubmed	HINARI
Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology https://academic.oup.com/jpp	United Kingdom	Monthly	Drug action, interactions, and new technologies	2,665 pounds for open-access license	No	Yes	Oxford University Press	Yes	Yes
North America									
Advances in Health Sciences Education https://www.springer.com/journal/10459/aims-and-scope	Canada	NS[†]	Theory and practice	£1890.00 / $2780.00 / €2190.00	No	Yes	Springer	Yes	Yes
Canadian Pharmacists Journal https://journals.sagepub.com/home/cph	Canada	Bi-monthly	Pharmacy practice research	NS[†]	NS[†]	Yes	Sage Publications	Yes	Yes
The Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy https://www.cjhp-online.ca/index.php/cjhp/index	Canada	Bi-monthly	Pharmacists in hospitals and other collaborative healthcare settings optimise safe and effective drug use	Free	Yes	Yes	Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists	Yes	No
American Journal of Health System Pharmacy http://www.ajhp.org	United States	Monthly	Drug therapy and pharmacy practice innovations in hospitals and health systems	Free	No	Yes	American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacy / Oxford University Press	Yes	Yes
American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education www.ajpe.org	United States	NS[†]	Pharmaceutical education	NS[†]	NS[†]	Yes	American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy	Yes	Yes
Annals of Pharmacotherapy http://journals.sagepub.com/home/aop	United States	Monthly	Efficient, safe and cost-effective pharmacotherapy	Free. To print figures in color there is a cost to the authors of $800 USD for the first page and $200 USD for each additional page.	No	Yes	Sage Publications	Yes	Yes
Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning https://www.journals.elsevier.com/currents-in-pharmacy-teaching-and-learning/	United States	NS[†]	Pharmacy education	Color production / print	No	Yes	Elsevier	Yes	Yes

Journal and website	Country	Frequency	Aims and scope	Article processing charges	Online access only	Open access	Publisher	Indexing	
								Medline/ Pubmed	HINARI
Hospital Pharmacy https://journals.sagepub.com/home/hpxa	United States	Bi-monthly	Best practices and medication safety	Free	No	Yes	Sage Publications	Yes	Yes
Innovations in Pharmacy-Education Section http://pubs.lib.umn.edu/innovations/	United States	Quarterly	Pharmacy practice, education, and policy	Free	Yes	Yes	University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing	Yes	No
Journal of Managed Care and Specialty Pharmacy (JMCP) http://www.jmcp.org/	United States	Monthly	Managed care, pharmacy, thought leadership and research	Free	No	Yes	Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy	Yes	No
Journal of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (JACCP) https://accpjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/25749870	United States	Monthly	Clinical pharmacy practice	Free	Yes	Yes	John Wiley & Sons, Inc.	Yes	Yes
Journal of the American Pharmacists Association http://www.japha.org/	United States	NS†	Contemporary pharmacy practice to improve patient care	NS†	No	Yes	Elsevier	Yes	Yes
Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences https://jpharmsci.org/	United States	Monthly	Basic pharmaceutical science	NS†	No	Yes	John Wiley & Sons Inc.	Yes	Yes
Pharmacotherapy: Journal of Human Pharmacology and Drug Therapy http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/(ISSN)1875-9114	United States	Monthly	Human pharmacology and drug therapy	$100 USD	No	Yes	John Wiley & Sons, Inc.	Yes	Yes
Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy http://www.rsap.org/	United States	Monthly	Social and administrative pharmaceutical sciences	Gold access: $3510 USD, excluding taxes.	No	Yes	Elsevier	Yes	Yes

†NS – not stated on journal website and no response to inquiries

Open access journals are another option to make research reports more readily available worldwide but are usually quite costly. If it is affordable for the authors, then publishing via open access will allow anyone to access the full pdf of the article from the journal website. This means that when the link to the published paper is shared via social media or email, anyone who clicks on the link can download the article without needing a subscription to the journal. Links for traditional publications can be shared via social media; however, when the reader clicks on the link, they will not be able to access the full paper unless they or their organisation subscribes. The World Health Organization (WHO) developed the HINARI Programme for Access to Health Research with support from public and private partners to provide free access to a wide range of scientific journals to low- and middle-income countries based on specific criteria. Therefore, choosing to publish in a journal indexed by HINARI will also increase access worldwide.

Increasing the chances of publication

After identifying a variety of journals whose aims and scope are appropriate for a manuscript, one will need to prioritise the list and decide where to submit it first. Factors such as intended audiences and usage, peer review to assure scientific quality, visibility such as open access rather than fee-based access, prestige based on the citation metrics and editorial board, and fee submission must be considered when deciding what journal to utilise (Shokraneh *et al*., 2012). Another important parameter to keep in mind is the likelihood of acceptance, which can be assessed based on the number of published papers and issues per year, the number of publications from the authors' country in the journal, and rejection/acceptance rates, if available. This information, including authorship guidelines, is included on the journal's website. If one is part of an academic institution that puts a strong emphasis on JIF as a way to identify quality scholarship, the faculty member will likely prioritise submitting their manuscripts to higher impact journals. However, to help manage acceptance expectations, it is important to be aware of the considerable rejection rates, which are reported to be 80 – 95% for some journals for initial manuscript submissions (Khadilkar, 2018).

To improve the chances of having work published, one may need to start off with publishing in smaller, local journals before developing the experience that will increase their probability of publishing in prestigious journals. Journal guidelines are usually on the journal website under the "About" section and may include information such as the scope, contact, editorial board members, open-access policy, and charges. Regardless of where the paper is submitted, it should always be formatted according to the author guidelines on the journal website under the "Submission" section, which may include a submission checklist, manuscript preparation instructions, manuscript categories, and editorial policies.

Authors that pay close attention to the guidelines make editors happy. As the spelling, grammar, and flow of the article are also important, those who are not fluent in English should seek a partner to assist with editing the article prior to submission. In addition, one should create a backup journal submission list so that if and when rejection occurs, there is an immediate plan to revise per the new author guidelines and submit to the next preferred journal before losing momentum. If the authors are lucky enough to have their manuscript peer-reviewed, even if this ultimately results in a rejection, it should be considered a positive outcome. Peer review comments can be used to improve the manuscript and increase the prospect of acceptance when submitted to the next journal on the list.

Predatory journals

When notified that a manuscript has been accepted for publication, authors may become ecstatic to complete the process for publication. However, this may also make it easier for them to become pulled in and victimised by predatory journals, which prioritise self-interest and profit at the expense of scholarship. Predatory journals have collected millions of dollars in publication fees, and may include false or misleading information, deviate from best editorial practices, demonstrate a lack of transparency, and/or use aggressive solicitation tactics (Katritsis, 2019).

Publishing with a predatory journal may lead to a fake peer review that will undermine the scientific conversation, difficulties having research being found and used by others, and scams where authors lose their hard work. Resources with a list of predatory journals, such as Beall's List, are available in Table I, but as this list is not all-inclusive, authors need to watch out for journals that publish duplicate content, have spelling or grammatical errors on the website or solicitation emails, and do not clearly state the peer review process or publication fees (Grudniewicz, Moher, & Cobey, 2019). Also, reputable journals are more likely to be indexed in databases such as Medline and are either a member of the Committee on Publication and Ethics or the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association. If one decides to use a journal with publication fees or chooses to pay for open access, these fees should not be assessed until the manuscript is fully accepted. Be wary of any journal that asks for payment upfront prior to receiving peer reviews back and submitting revisions.

Conclusion

In summary, searching for and prioritising journals that are most relevant to the manuscript, as well as going through the submission and editing process, can be challenging. However, publications are crucial not only for maintaining one's academic position but also for expanding scientific knowledge and scholarship on a global scale. When deciding where to submit a manuscript, consider factors beyond the journal impact factor, such as the intended audience members of the journal and how the aim and scope fit the research, and beware of the potential occurrence of predatory journals. To bring research to successful publication, be well prepared, adhere to journal author guidelines, be persistent and patient through the probable rejection, revision, and resubmission processes, and consider collaboration with international partners when needed for English language support.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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