

Correspondence

Comment on: Predatory journals: What can we do to protect their prey?

We read an informative and intriguing editorial contributed by Laine *et al.*¹ We agree with the editors that the phenomenon of predatory publishing threatens the integrity of scientific research and the credibility of scholarly communication. However, why do researchers feel compelled to publish in these outlets? The authors also suggest an answer to this question.¹ It is the 'pressure of getting credit!'

Academic institutions, funding agencies and promotion committees often evaluate researchers based on the number of their publications or the impact factor of the journals in which the papers are published. Predatory publishers exploit this pressure by offering rapid publication. Have we ever sought to uproot the problem? Laine *et al.* opined that 'predatory journals have developed strategies to profit by taking advantage of a *climate* that nurtures the growth of open access, author-pays publication models'. If we can change this *climate*, perhaps predatory publishers will cease to exist. We can imagine a *climate* where there is no credit for publication. No authors will rush to get their article published; instead, will concentrate on the academics and research.

Perhaps, grounded on this concept, the Indian University Grants Commission (the authority to maintain standards in higher education in India) has omitted mandatory publication for eligibility for award of a PhD degree.² Additionally, a study by Mondal *et al.*³ found that when the National Medical Commission (the authority to maintain quality of medical education in India) revised the list of accepted indexing databases by omitting a dubious indexing database, publications in predatory journals decreased drastically. Hence, if the need for publication was eliminated entirely for medical teachers, the incidence (and thus the prevalence) of publications in predatory journals would diminish further.

Institutions should foster a culture that values meaningful scientific contributions over publication counts. Supporting

alternative dissemination methods, such as a controlled repository for disseminating research findings,³ may also help. Promotion and tenure committees should consider broader measures of impact, such as ongoing research projects, academic activity, contributions to societal change, collaboration and mentorship.⁴

The fight against predatory journals cannot be won solely by identifying fraudulent entities. Many a time, authors actively seek predatory journals due to the pressure of credit. Therefore, we need to change the credit system and build a climate where researchers do not require publications for career progression. If this happens, perhaps in the near future, we will no longer need to protect the prey.

Conflicts of interest. None declared

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[To cite: Mondal H, Mondal S. Comment on: Predatory journals: What can we do to protect their prey? *Natl Med J India* DOI: 10.25259/NMJI_250_2025]