Library Opportunities for Increasing Engagement: Educating Users About Questionable and Predatory Publishing

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Objective

The rise of open accessing publishing has contributed to an increase of low quality, questionable, and even predatory journals in the scholarly publishing landscape (1). These publishing groups frequently engage in aggressive marketing directly to authors, oftentimes promising fast-track publishing, low or no fees for submission, and positions on journal editorial boards. The Skelton Medical Library’s objective was to increase library engagement by educating users of the prevalence of questionable and potentially predatory journals.

Methods

Librarians assembled multiple scholarly publishing resources on a “Research Tools” page on the library website (2). Resources supporting measuring research impact, identifying scholarly publications, and open access publishing were included. MUSM-librarian recorded video tutorials and voiceover PowerPoint slides of relevant resources were also posted to the library site.

In addition to the website resources, librarians also proactively reached out to department chairs and resident directors to highlight the prevalence of predatory and questionable publishing and offered information sessions on the topic. Librarians also went as far as searching potentially predatory journal websites for affiliated faculty members listed as contributing authors or editors.

Results

The predatory and questionable publishing topic generated interest among department chairs and led to the library development and delivery of faculty development sessions, student lunch and learn sessions, and a hospital information session on questionable publishing. When instances of affiliated faculty were discovered on potentially predatory journal websites, librarians reached out to administrators to make them aware of the findings.

Conclusion

With the number of questionable and predatory journals on the rise, the scientific scholarly publishing landscape is increasingly challenging for authors to navigate. By taking proactive measures and reaching out to institutional administration, the library can make valuable contacts with users to create an open dialogue surrounding biomedical scholarly communication.

References
