

Journals Need to Adapt Quality Peer-Review Strictly

*Ravin Bhandari¹, Dirgha Raj Joshi,² Kapil Amgain³

¹School of Medicine, Department of Pharmacy, Karnali Academy of Health Sciences, Jumla, Nepal

²College of Pharmacy, Medicinal Chemistry Lab, Yonsei University, Incheon, Republic of Korea

³Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Karnali Academy of Health Sciences, Jumla, Nepal

Correspondence: Ravin Bhandari; Email: ravinbhandari2000@gmail.com

Scientific Publication is obligatory for many reasons, like granting scholarship and for academic promotion. Publication plays vital role in sharing and communicating research findings among scientific communities. Hence, published material should be authentic, free from fraudulence and with accurate conclusion, then only one can carry out further research on the basis of previous findings. Hence, for proper scrutiny and quality control of a study and the manuscript, evaluation and review by experts (peers) of the respective fields is essential. This process is called peer-review, which is the backbone of scientific steps. It's a way to evaluate the work of the scientist by experts with similar or higher research experiences or competencies. This will help reduce publication of sub-optimal or misleading studies. Even post-publication, an article may need to be removed if any falsehood is found. This process is called retraction of article from the journal. Every year, several articles are retracted after their publication. Retraction of article from journal is usually due to misleading reporting, research misconduct, plagiarism, negotiated peer-review, data errors etc. Retraction of articles have definite adverse consequences, especially in patients care and health policy making. A good example is the finding by Dr. Andrew Wakefield and colleagues on the association of MMR vaccination with autism. It was published in *The Lancet* in 1998, and 12 years later, it was retracted when it was found to be false. This incidence encouraged the journal editors and stake holders to work more on fair and strict review processes. Peer-review is the only core way to maintain the standard of publication.^{1,2,3} In this competitive world, for promotion in university position, grant application for projects and social and academic reputation, researchers are in rush to publish their work as early as possible. So, to control

misleading information and maintain scientific integrity, peer review plays a crucial role.⁴


Nowadays, online scientific publishers are increasing in number, many of which are open access Journals. Nevertheless, during publication and submission, author must be aware enough about the journal and publisher. More than 15000 non-peer-reviewed journals are currently available in different discipline of study, although it is quite a difficult to count the figure. The growing number of such predatory journals is of severe problem as they are publishing the paper without any peer-review process. This carries obvious danger for the upcoming generations, contaminates the scientific fields as a whole, and lets the public belief in science and scientists down.^{5,6} Predatory journals accept manuscript for publication along with article processing charge (APC), without performing promised quality checks for issues such as research misconduct like plagiarism, data manipulation, data falsification or ethical approval etc. They mention double-blind peer reviews in their journal guideline, but they are not following the terms and norms. They recruit fake manpower including editors, reviewers and fake certificates, and mislead the whole peer-review process. Their webpage may also show all such misleading information, which are tempting to believe by inexperienced authors. The exercises of predatory publishing greatly harms the honour of the authors, institution and funding agencies. Also it is waste of time, effort and money, and does not add any contribution to the authors.^{7,8}

Current situation like pandemic, hundreds of articles about COVID-19 are published each day and hence in the name of rapid findings, we need to be more careful. Mostly the journal editors and reviewers should be at the front line to control it. The growing number of open access journals is a benefit

on one side, but on the other hand it accepts sub-standard and manipulated research works to get financial benefit.^{9,10} To overcome this problem, many journals are trying several methods. For example, the Journal of Organic Chemistry and Organic Letter published by the American Chemical Society started receiving raw data like FID file of NMR. Eventually, everyone can access to the original files and can notice misleading conditions.¹¹

Hence, in conclusion, all the concerned authority, including author, journal editorial team and policy makers need to realize the importance of peer-review and in selection of appropriate reviewer. Local

and national institution, while granting research funds and considering academic promotion, should take strong action and regulation process towards predatory journals and publication. Mandatory pedagogic courses are included in all academic programs to ameliorate research ethics and morality. In addition, almost all journals need to adapt authentic steps as per the journal scope and make a strict and fair peer-review process to minimize the chance of retraction and falling within predatory journal listing. This will maintain the ethical and scientific quality as well as ingenuity.

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