

References From Predatory Publishers: Policy Statement for the Journal of Human Lactation

JHL Editorial Team

Keywords

breastfeeding, predatory publishing, publishing ethics, *Journal of Human Lactation*

Background

Predatory publishers and the journals they publish are a constant threat to the integrity of scholarly publication and to researchers trying to publish their work. Grudniewicz et al. (2019) defined predatory journals and publishers as “entities that prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship and are characterized by false or misleading information, deviation from the best editorial and publication practices, a lack of transparency, and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices” (p. 210). The lack of quality peer review that characterizes these journals poses an ever present threat to legitimate scholarly journals. When an otherwise reputable and sound scholarly work submitted for publication includes references that have been published in a predatory journal, it diminishes the quality of the manuscript, as the authors have referenced studies that have not been adequately peer reviewed, with little editorial quality control (Committee on Publication Ethics Council, 2019; Strong, 2019). Although the *JHL* editorial staff understands that it can be difficult and time consuming for authors to scrutinize the journals and publishers of all of their references cited, it is essential that they do so. We at the *JHL* are committed to upholding the scholarly integrity of our journal and to helping authors publish their best work.

We do understand that no definitive and agreed-upon list of predatory journals or publishers is currently available (Grudniewicz et al., 2019). Therefore, determining if a journal or publisher is predatory is not yet a straightforward task; however, the *Think. Check. Submit* campaign has a simplified checklist authors can use as a guide (Think. Check. Submit, 2002). A number of blacklists of publishers and journals that meet the definition of predatory exist that may be a useful resource, as well as policies and recommendations from a number of international organizations that focus on assuring publication quality standards (e.g., the Committee on Publication Ethics, the Directory of Open Access Journals, the Open Access Scholarly Publishers’ Association, African Journals Online, and others). None of these tools alone is

enough to prove that a journal or publisher currently meets the definition of predatory (Grudniewicz et al., 2019), but they are all useful tools that, when used wisely, can facilitate the avoidance of predatory journals. Our goal at the *JHL* is to not publish any references from predatory journals or publishers; therefore, we check all references using all these available tools to meet this goal prior to manuscript acceptance. To that end, we require that all *JHL* submissions abide by our policy.

Policy

The *Journal of Human Lactation* will not knowingly publish references from articles in predatory journals. Furthermore, the *JHL* editorial staff will take the following proactive steps to avoid publishing references from predatory journals:

- Within our submission process, authors are required to ensure that none of the articles they have referenced were published in what they believe were predatory journals.
- After a manuscript has been accepted (after peer review and revisions have been completed) the *JHL* editorial staff will check all the references independently to determine if there is evidence that any are predatory. For references in languages other than English, an English translation is required; however, these language differences may be a complicating factor in this assessment. In these cases, we will make

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every effort to determine the quality of references and to ensure that they are not from predatory sources.

- If any questionable references are found, authors will be asked to either remove or replace them. If the references cannot be replaced and no other references to support the accompanying content exist, the content will need to be removed from the manuscript, or we will not be able to publish the manuscript.
- Authors may contest a decision the *JHL* editors have made regarding a predatory journal; however, the *JHL* editors retain the final decision.

Given the tools currently available to us, this policy is our best option for protecting the quality of the scholarship we publish. We are hopeful that appropriate tools will be developed soon to identify predatory works, negating the need for this policy.

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