

Coalition for Open Access Publishing of Public Health in Africa (COPPHA) Peer Reviewing Course

WEEK 1

The Peer Review Process and Identifying Predatory Publishers

Professor Richard F. Heller
Emeritus Professor, Universities
of Manchester, UK, and
Newcastle, Australia

Femi Qudus Arogundade -
Open Science Community
Manager, WACREN

Organized by



In collaboration with



African Forum for Research
and Education in Health
Limited by Guarantee



With support from

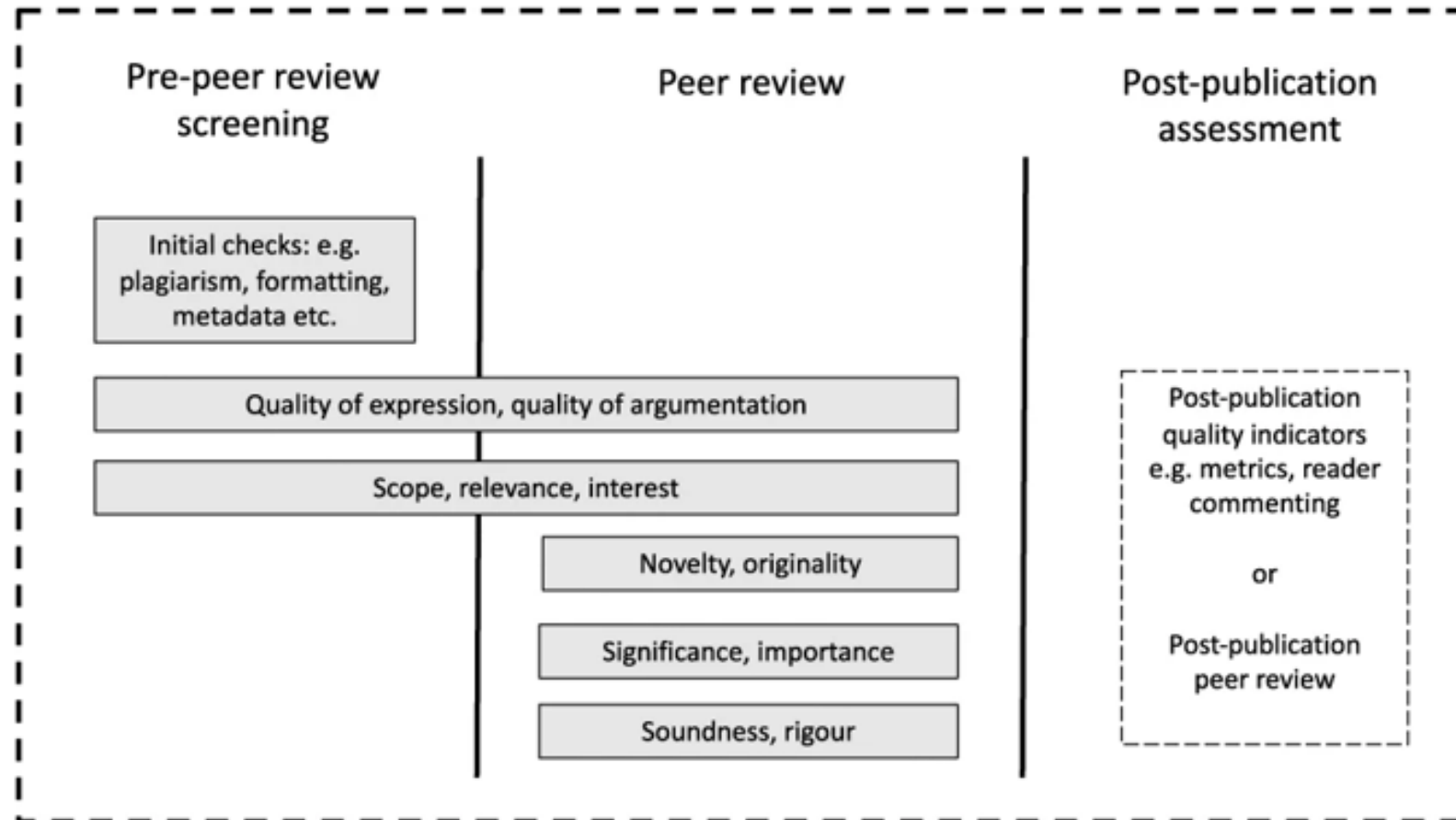


Richard Smith, Editor of the British Medical Journal for many years

'Peer review is at the heart of the processes of not just medical journals but of all of science. It is the method by which grants are allocated, papers published, academics promoted, and Nobel prizes won. Yet it is hard to define'...

'But it is something to do with a grant application or a paper being scrutinized by a third party—who is neither the author nor the person making a judgement on whether a grant should be given or a paper published.'

Peer Reviewing is only part of the editorial process



Organized by



In collaboration with



African Forum for Research
and Education in Health
Limited by Guarantee



With support from



Incentives and Responsibilities

- It is important that researchers act as peer reviewers to maintain the scientific integrity of the system.
- However, even though the publisher may make a profit the reviewers and editors are usually volunteers.
- Editors often find it frustrating when potential reviewers refuse to help. There are ways of offering incentives and rewards to reviewers to encourage their participation in the system.
- We will discuss open publishing of reviews in the next course, in which case credit can be given to published reviews.

Some of My Experiences

I have stopped counting my publications, but have more than 450 peer reviewed publications.

Each time, I have received valuable feedback from reviewers who have improved the quality of the paper.

For the past few years, all of my papers have been published as open access.

This has benefits and disadvantages .

Some of My Experiences

I submitted a paper in January 2024, which was sent for review

Up to today, in October 2024, I have received no feedback from the journal

The subject was about international students who come to study in Australia

While the journal was sitting on the paper, the Australian government was formulating policy on international students

Luckily, at the same time as submitting to the journal, I also published this as an open access preprint so the evidence in the paper could be considered in the policy debate

Organized by



In collaboration with



African Forum for Research
and Education in Health
Limited by Guarantee



With support from



Experience from others

The course discussion forums have already been rich in the shared experience of many participants

This demonstrates the importance of learning from each other as well as from the resources on the course site

Maxwell (COPPHA Course Participant) asked in the Introduction forum what we aim to do as a results of participating in the course – I recommend that we each consider this

We hope that many will want to join the next course on open publishing and open reviewing where we present African publishing options

A cautionary tale (tail?)

A paper titled ‘What’s the deal with birds?’ **was published less than a week after being submitted** in a journal called Scientific Journal of Research and Review.

Here is part of the Abstract:

“Many people wonder: what’s the deal with birds? This is a common query. Birds are pretty weird. I mean, they have feathers. WTF? Most other animals don’t have feathers. To investigate this issue, I looked at some birds. I looked at a woodpecker, a parrot, and a penguin. They were all pretty weird! In conclusion, we may never know the deal with birds, but further study is warranted.”



In collaboration with



African Forum for Research
and Education in Health
Limited by Guarantee



With support from



End of the tale (tail)

In the Acknowledgements section the authors said:

“We thank Big Bird from Sesame Street for comments on the manuscript. Several trained monkeys transcribed videos.”

The processing fees to authors by this journal vary from \$649 to \$1780, depending on the country of the author and the type of research article.

This tale raises many issues that we might discuss



In collaboration with



African Forum for Research
and Education in Health
Limited by Guarantee



With support from



Predatory Publishers and How to Identify Them

Predatory Publishers:

- According to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), predatory publishing is “systematic for-profit publication of purportedly scholarly content such as journals, articles, monographs, books, or conference proceedings in a deceptive or fraudulent way and without any regard for quality assurance.”
- Predatory publishers use various Open Access Publishing Models to exploit researchers, especially early career researchers, by charging high fees for substandard or fake journals without offering proper editorial or peer review services.



In collaboration with



African Forum for Research
and Education in Health
Limited by Guarantee



With support from



How to Spot Predatory Publishers/Journals

- **Unclear or Non-Existent Peer Review Process:** They offer no transparency about their review process. They often skip peer review entirely, leading to low-quality publications.
- **Promises of Rapid Review:** If a journal promises an unusually quick peer review process or does not mention it at all, it could indicate a predatory publisher. Make sure you scrutinize their peer review process.
- **Excessive Article Processing Charges (APCs):** High fees without any added value or quality assurance. They may also charge a handling fee instead of a publication fee, which means you will need to pay even if your paper is not accepted. It is important to understand all fees clearly before submitting.
- **False Indexing Claims:** Predatory journals often claim to be indexed in reputable databases such as DOAJ, SCOPUS, or Web of Science but these claims are mostly false.
- **No Affiliation with Reputable Organizations:** No visible connection to organizations like the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).
- **Verify Credibility:** To steer clear of predatory journals, start by consulting resources like "Beall's List" and "Think.Check.Submit," but also incorporate other tools and apply your own critical judgment for a well-informed choice before submitting your manuscript.

Remain Skeptical

Approach unsolicited journal or conference invitations with doubt. If it seems too good to be true, investigate before engaging. Be cautious of journals that:

- Don't match your field.
- Have unusually fast peer review process.
- If something feels off, such as hidden publication costs, no archive of past issues, no current issues, or unverifiable editorial board members, consider it a red flag. Always check further before proceeding or engaging.

Organized by



In collaboration with



African Forum for Research
and Education in Health
Limited by Guarantee



With support from



Share Your Experiences with Predatory Publishers

- Have you ever been approached by a journal or conference that seemed suspicious?
- Have you faced challenges identifying trustworthy journals to publish your work?
- How did the experience impact your research or publishing process?

Join the COPPHA Community

WhatsApp Group: Stay connected for course updates and reminders.

Support: If you have any questions or seek collaborations, email us at coppa@wacren.net.

We're Here to Help: Our goal is to support you throughout your learning experience!

