

# Combating Predatory Academic Journals and Conferences

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**On behalf of**

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Working Group**

**DOAJ webinar series, 17 March 2022**

Project

2020

# Combatting Predatory Academic Journals and Conferences

OVERVIEW

PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS

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GORDON AND BETTY  
**MOORE**  
FOUNDATION

## National academies plan assault on predatory journals

By Robin Bisson

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## Academies to target predatory journals

Project aims to map global impact of bad practices in publishing and scale up interventions

Robin Bisson

An international project to determine the scale of predatory publishing practices is looking to harness the authority of national academies to turn the tide on profit-driven, bad-faith journals taking advantage of researchers.

Predatory journals offer rapid publication of research papers but often lack robust peer review, and their main aim is to collect fees from researchers. There is also an increasing trend for predatory conferences that present like standard scientific meetings but lack quality control over presentations and charge extortionate attendance fees.

"A lot of people either don't know this is an issue or think it's just an issue for the developing world," said Teresa Stoepler, executive director of policy at the InterAcademy Partnership. The global network counts more than 140 science, engineering and medical academies among its members, including the European Academies Science Advisory Council, the National

Academy of Sciences in the United States, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and African Academy of Sciences.

"We really don't know the extent of the problem globally, but it seems to be widespread and has potential to damage individual careers and reverberate throughout the research enterprise," said Stoepler. Many previous initiatives to combat predatory journals have focused on creating blacklists or whitelists, including the widely used but now defunct list by American librarian Jeffrey Beal.

"Very quickly our working group decided that it didn't want to create another checklist—they are already numerous and difficult to maintain," said Tracey Elliott, project director at the InterAcademy Partnership, following the first meeting of the working group in late June.

Instead, the InterAcademy project will survey researchers around the world at different stages of their careers, and look at scaling up and adapting interventions, such as training programmes on good practice for early career researchers, to combat predatory practices.


By the end of 2021, the team behind it hopes to produce recommendations for research institutions, policymakers, publishers and funders. Elliott said funders in particular are a key lever in combatting predatory practices. "In some cases they are funding poor quality research which is wasteful at best," she said.

Stoepler said unethical practices have increased during the Covid-19 pandemic, with even legitimate, non-predatory publishers being overwhelmed by the volume of submissions.

In June two medical journals, the Lancet and the New England Journal of Medicine, retracted papers, including one that had halted international trials of the experimental Covid-19 drug hydroxychloroquine, due to questions over the data underlying them.

"Some of the information that's getting out there to policymakers on Covid-19 is alarming," said Elliott. "Whether the articles are retracted or not, they are still there in the public domain."

Another study will look at research evaluation practices and how they may exacerbate the growth of predatory journals and conferences emphasising publication at all costs.

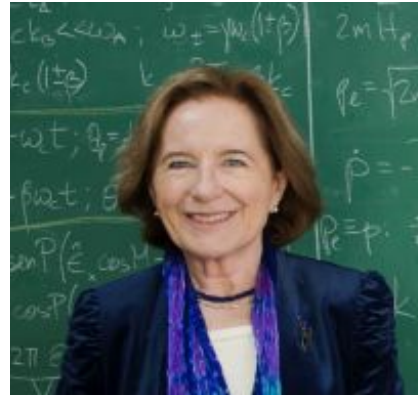
"We are challenging a well-established system, and in addressing research evaluation we would be challenging it even more," said Elliott. 



"Some of the information getting out there to policymakers on Covid-19 is alarming."

Tracey Elliott, project director at the InterAcademy Partnership

# The International Working Group



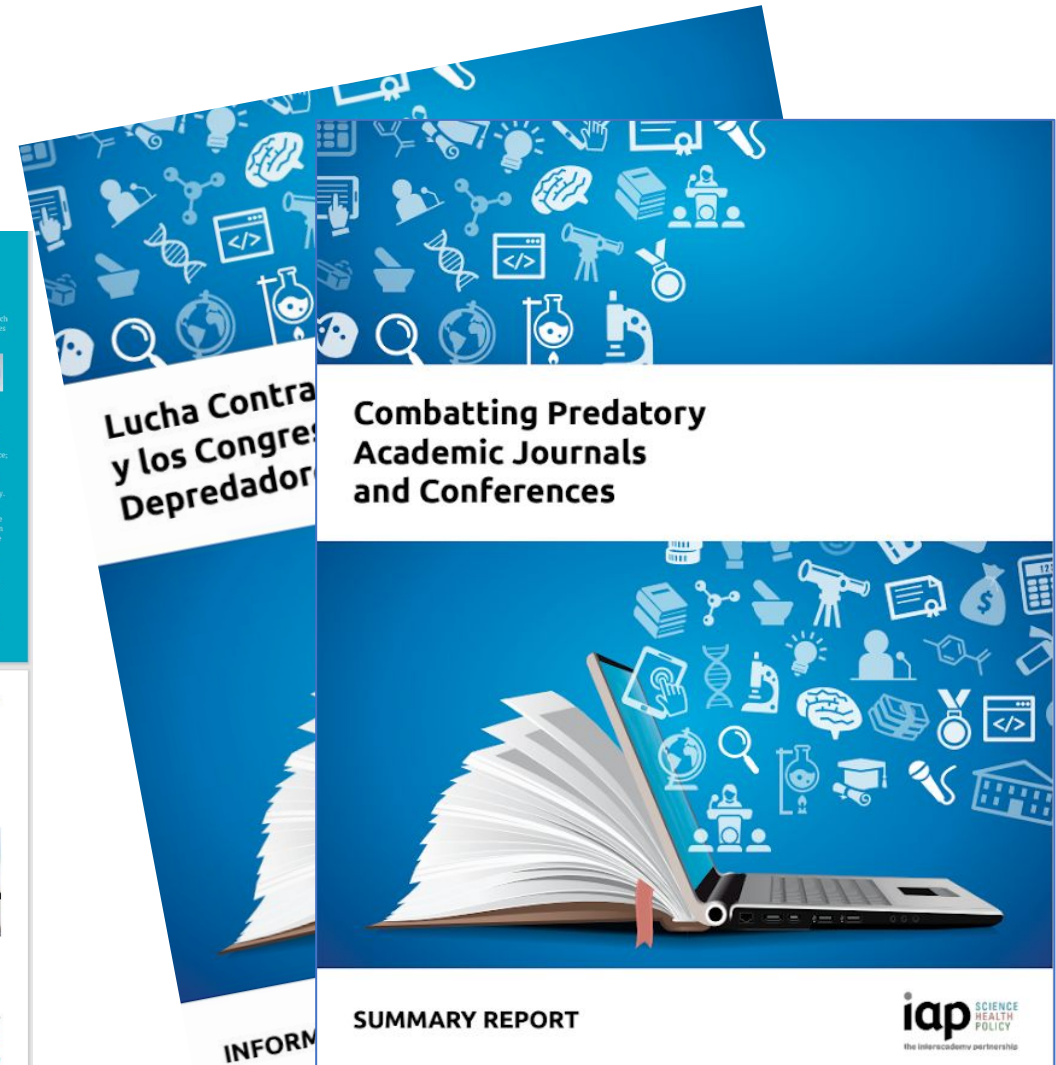
“Combatting predatory academic journals and conferences”

# Study objectives

- ❑ Define predatory and unethical practices in academic journals and conferences
- ❑ Gauge their prevalence and impact
- ❑ Understand the primary drivers or root causes
- ❑ Examine efforts to-date to combat predatory journals and conferences around the world
- ❑ Provide concrete recommendations for a GLOBAL STRATEGY to address the problem, that engages all key stakeholders







“Combating predatory academic journals and conferences”

# Report launch



**LAUNCH EVENT**  
**WED, 16 MARCH**  
**1300 – 1500 UTC**

**Combatting Predatory  
Academic Journals  
and Conferences**

**iap** SCIENCE  
HEALTH  
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Panellists represent:

- The IAP Working Group
- Global Young Academy
- UNESCO
- International Science Council
- Global Research Council
- Cabells / Digital Science
- Hindawi Publishing
- Elsevier
- African Research Universities Alliance

**ALL ARE WELCOME** - Register  
here: <https://tinyurl.com/predatorypracticeslaunch>

# Common features of “predatory” journals and conferences

- ❑ They solicit articles from researchers through practices that exploit the pressure on researchers to publish and present their work.
- ❑ Features include, but are not limited to:
  - rapid pay-to-publish/present models without rigorous (or indeed any) peer review
  - fake editorial or conference boards falsely listing respected scientists
  - fraudulent impact factors or metrics
  - journal and conference titles that are deceptively similar to legitimate ones
  - aggressive spam invitations to solicit articles and abstracts, including outside of a researcher’s own expertise
- ❑ These genuinely fraudulent practices continue to evolve and are becoming more difficult to distinguish between low quality, unethical and questionable publishing and conferencing practices.



COMMENT · 11 DECEMBER 2019

## Predatory journals: no definition, no defence

Leading scholars and publishers from ten countries have agreed a definition of predatory publishing that can protect scholarship. It took 12 hours of discussion, 18 questions and 3 rounds to reach.



## WORLD VIEW A personal take on events



### India strikes back against predatory journals

*Our foe is determined and adaptable, says Bhushan Patwardhan. A list of credible titles is the latest salvo in the fight against shoddy scholarship.*

## WORLD VIEW A personal take on events



### Illegitimate journals scam even senior scientists

*Kelly Cobey has seen a litany of researchers preyed on by predatory journals – and has ideas on how to stop it.*

## Predatory conferences 'now outnumber official scholarly events'

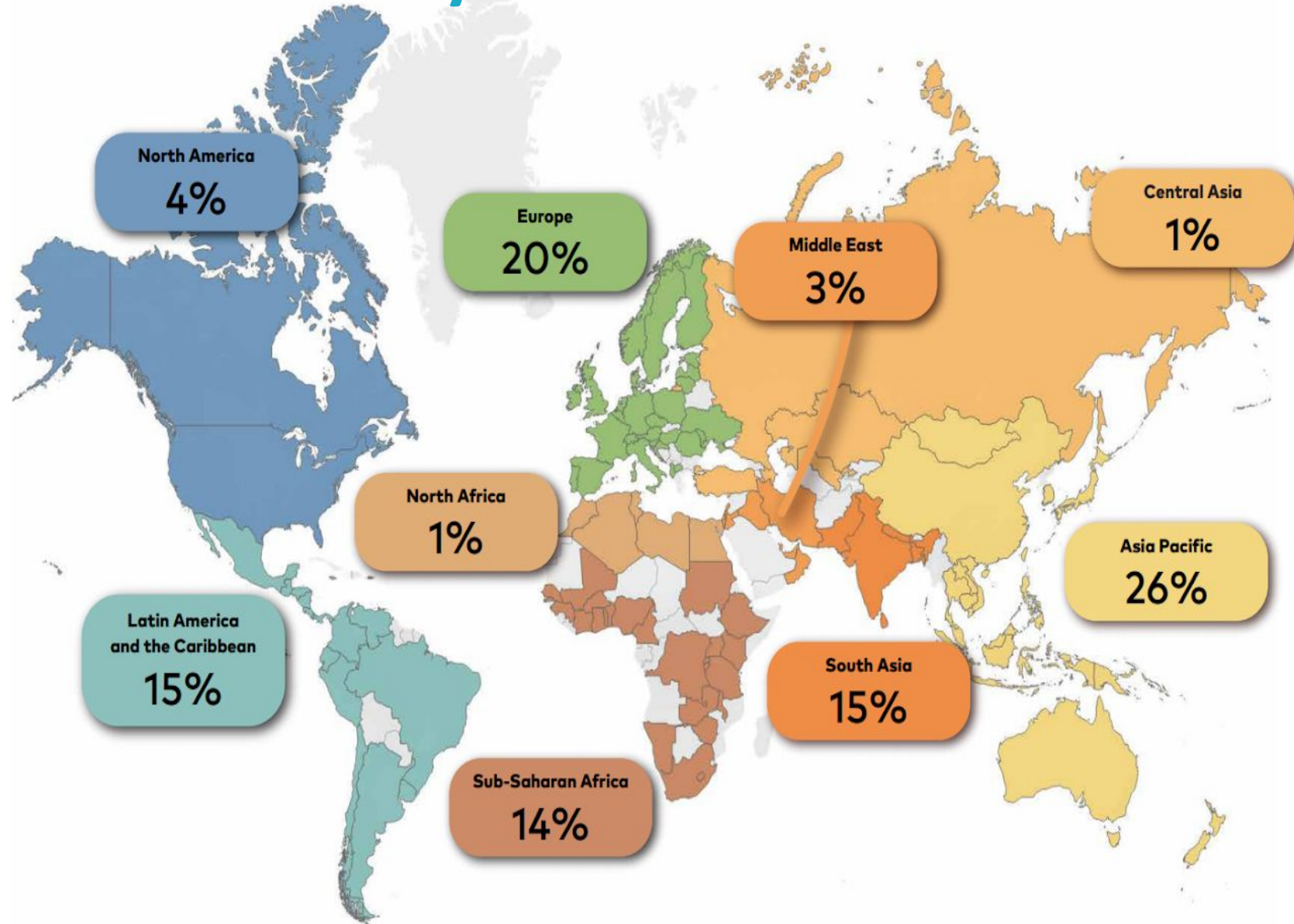
UK researcher who travelled to predatory conference in Denmark calls for greater awareness of problem





# Landmark survey of researchers

Total participants  
**1872**  
Total countries  
**112**



Opportunity  
Fri, 30 October 2020

Calling all researchers to participate in a landmark survey on academic predatory journals and conferences

Deadline  
Nov 30

**Over 80%**  
perceive that predatory practices are a **serious problem** or on the rise in their country of work.

# Survey headlines

- ❑ Researchers at **ALL career stages** need to be on their guard
- ❑ Researchers in **low and middle income countries** are more vulnerable
- ❑ Some **disciplines** are more vulnerable than others
  - researchers in arts and humanities with predatory journals
  - researchers in transdisciplinary & engineering sciences with predatory conferences
- ❑ **At least 14%** of respondents admit they have used a predatory journal or conference
- ❑ This equates to **over 1.2 million researchers** of the 8.8m around the world who could have used predatory outlets, with **billions of dollars of research costs** (people, materials, time) wasted as a result. **This requires urgent attention.**

**At least 24% of respondents have either published in a predatory journal, participated in a predatory conference, or don't know if they have.**

**They were not aware at the time**

“The conference looked very legitimate and non predatory. There was support from the university and several well known professors were in the invitations.”

**They needed to advance their career**

“You need to publish in a predatory journal to stay in the race.”

**It was a faster, easier, or cheaper option**

“I feel guilty but it is necessary to publish (in predatory journals) for my students to complete their study faster due to the limitation of time and scholarship.”

**They were encouraged by their peers**

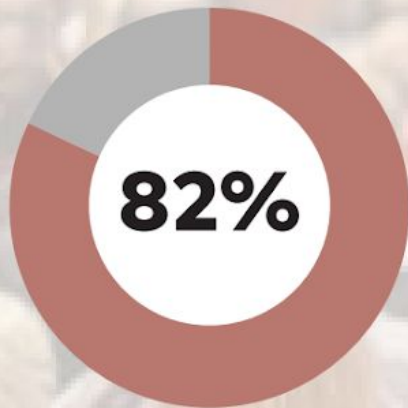
“The lead author suggested we publish in a predatory journal after a few rejections and one co-author was an editor at the journal, which made it difficult to criticize.”



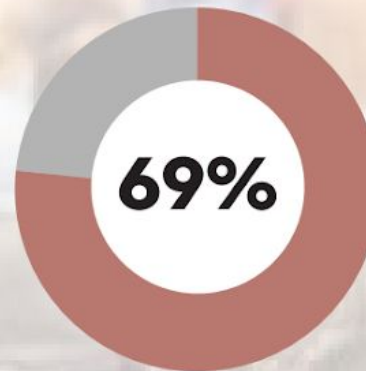
# Why it is important to address these practices

If left unchallenged, the majority of respondents believe predatory practices will have detrimental effects.

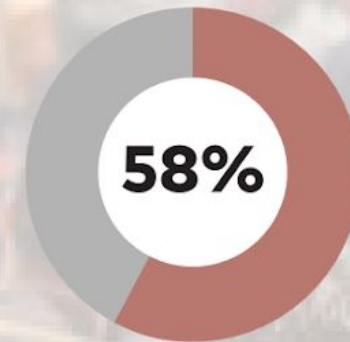
**Fuel misinformation  
in public policy**



**Infiltrate and  
undermine the  
research enterprise**



**Widen the research  
gap between high  
income and low  
income countries**



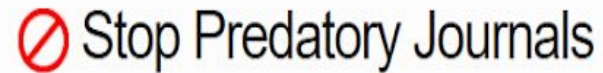


# Examples of resources already available

A beginner's guide to avoiding 'predatory' journals



<https://predatoryjournals.com/publishers/>



## Predatory Reports

Specialists analyze over 60 behavioral indicators to keep the community aware of the growing threats and to keep academia protected from exploitative operations.

Get a quote



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Predatory Conferences

## Tips on How to Identify and Avoid Predatory Conferences



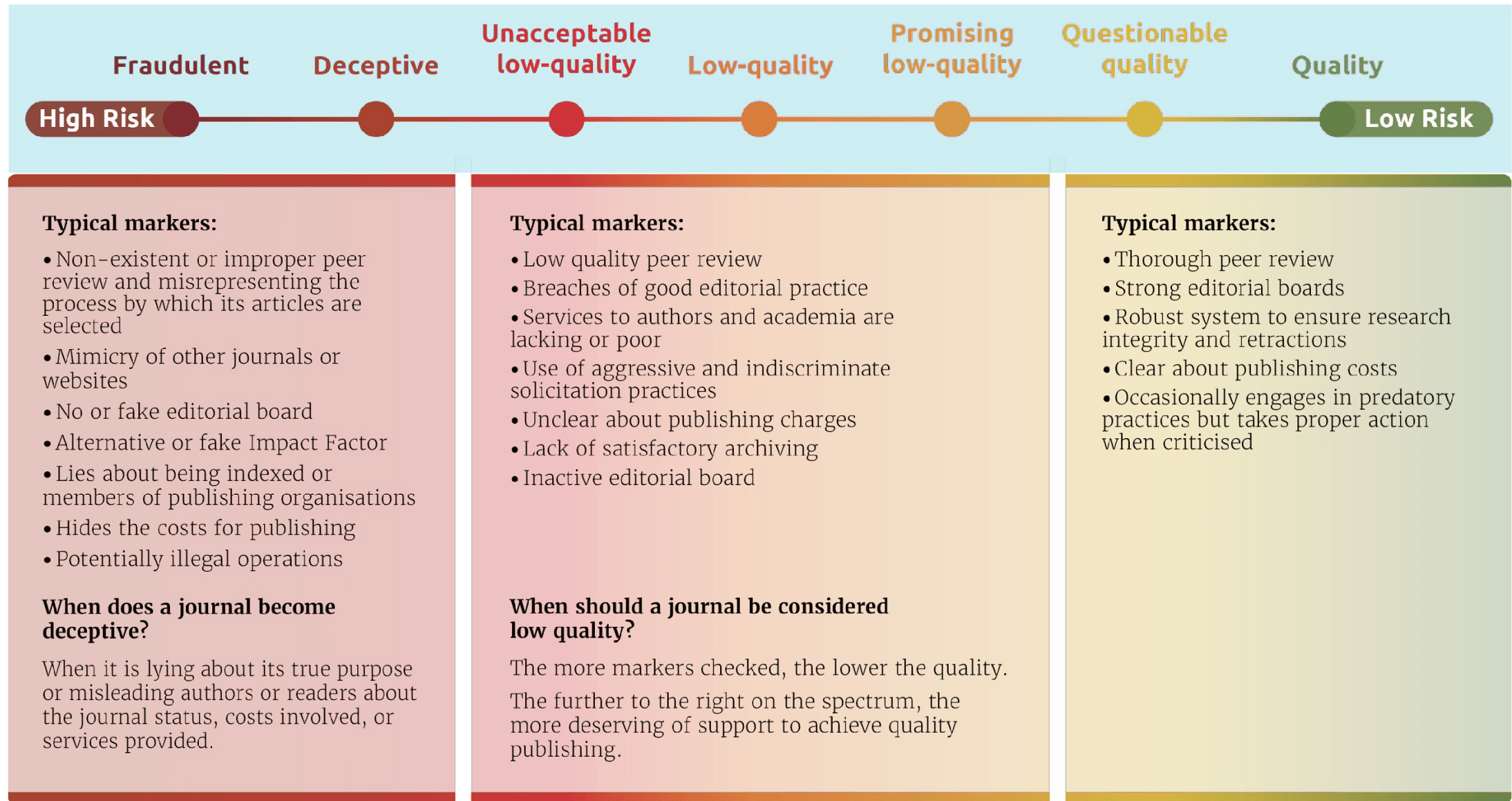
Online Regional Information System for Scientific Journals from Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal



Choose the right journal or publisher for your research

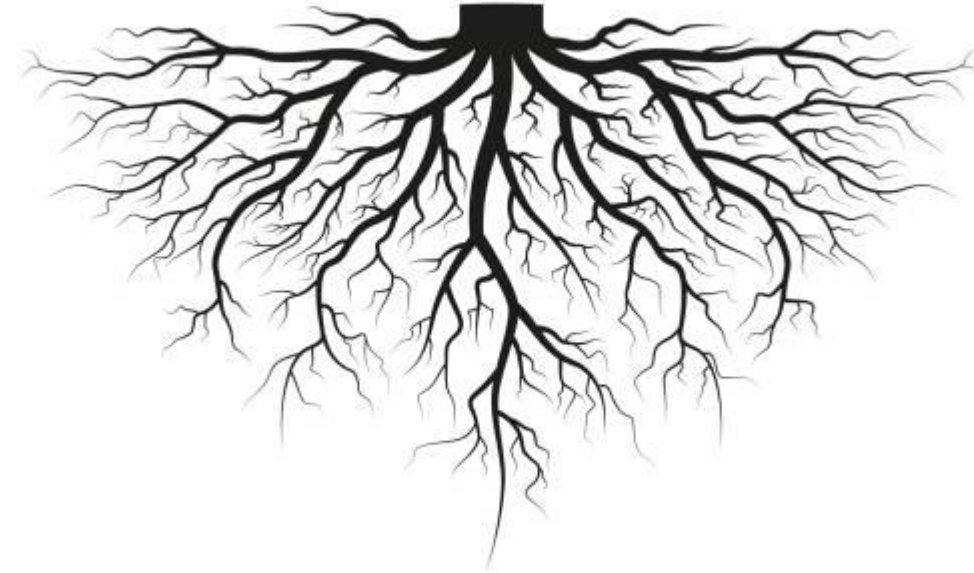


# A spectrum of predatory publishing practices



# Drivers or root causes

- **The monetisation and commercialisation of the research sector**, including an academic publishing system whose proprietary and commercial interests may lead to conflict with research integrity, with the **author-pays model** being especially prone to abuse.
- **Quantity-over-quality research evaluation systems**, together with the institutional drivers and incentives that shape the behaviour of individual academics.
- **The lack of transparency (whether fully open, anonymised or hybrid) in the peer-review process**, exacerbated by poor training, capacity and recognition of peer reviewers.



Thank you

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