

Beall's List Removed: What Stands Between Us and Open Access Predators?



To the Editor:

The ease in which electronic journals can be launched has led to the emergence of a new type of “scientific” journal, focused entirely on revenues and barely concerned with content, alas attempting to camouflage as the real thing. In 2010 Jeffrey Beall created an online public repository that listed open access journals suspected of predatory behavior, based on 52 predefined criteria, such as lack of peer review process, appointing fake academic boards, and false operating location.¹ Beall's list served as a platform for publications addressing the topic of open access predatory journals.² Of 30 consecutive unsolicited e-mails to a pediatrician (FBM) (n = 10), dermatologist (DM) (n = 10), and internist (EB) (n = 10) requesting paper submissions, all but 1 were on Beall's list.

The OMICS Publishing Group prominently appeared on Beall's list. In 2013 the US National Institute of Health stopped listing OMICS publications in PubMed Central and requested that this publisher stop making false claims of US government affiliations.³ OMICS threatened to sue Beall, seeking \$1 billion in damages,⁴ and Beall felt “personally threatened.”⁵ Another open access publisher (Canadian Center for Science and Education) stated that inclusion of their company on Beall's list was defamation and threatened “civil action.”⁶ On January 17, 2017 Beall's List and blog were taken offline. The University of Colorado declared that this decision was a “personal one” from Beall.⁷ Though it was speculated that the list would be moved to the stewardship of Cabell's International, the company denied any relationship with Beall, stating that the blog shut down owing to “threats and politics.”⁸

Currently the no-longer-updated list can be retrieved through web archiving services and will probably become obsolete over time. Though online directories, such as the “Directory of Open Access Journals,” enable to check for whitelisted journals, we are not aware of an active source warning against potential predatory journals.

We believe that the scientific community should benefit from a regularly updated list of open access predatory

journals, as was provided by Beall. We propose that international scientific organizations, such as the International Committee of Journals Editors, should take up this challenge and define criteria enabling the distinction between legitimate medical and scientific journals and predatory journals.

Refraining from addressing the emergence of pseudo-journals publishing pseudo-science may slowly erode the legitimacy of well-conducted science.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.amjmed.2017.03.040>

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Funding: None.

Conflict of Interest: None.

Authorship: All authors had access to the data and a role in writing the manuscript.

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