WHERE NOT TO PUBLISH: List and analysis of potential scam journals in health publishing

GOAL

The goal of this work is to offer a specific tool to identify scams in academic health journals by analysing their degree of compliance with the quality criteria of selected sources.

METHODOLOGY

To compile a specific list of potentially fraudulent health journals, we started by selecting journals from multidisciplinary blacklists and from lists offered by academic literature. After that, we selected different sources, all of them focused on assessing the quality of academic journals or, specifically, of academic health journals (16 sources). The work ended by cross-checking the journals on our list against all these sources to verify whether the journals were indexed or met the quality criteria, so as to get a more accurate picture of scam journals in health publishing.
1-. COMPILING A LIST OF HEALTH JOURNALS

- Journals from blacklists:

There are many blacklists of potentially fraudulent publications. One of the premises of our work was that we had to work with open blacklists:

- Beall List
- Stop Predatory Journals
- Kscien List
- No DOAJ

All these sources are multidisciplinary, not focused only on the health sciences. To narrow down the list to health journals, the next step was to detect and select them, which we did by using the keywords of the MeSH Thesaurus and reviewing the titles.

Result: 451 health journals from blacklists were included for the analysis.

- Journals from specific health works:

There is a large (and growing) academic literature focused on scam journals of specific health disciplines. A lot of articles offer a detailed list of scam journals in their fields, helping researchers in those fields in the difficult task of selecting a journal.

Those journals, many of them health journals, selected from lists in different articles\(^1\), were also added to our list.

Result: 417 health journals from lists in specific health works were included for the analysis.

The outcome of this first selection is a final list with \(868 (451 + 417)\) journals, all of them health (or health-related) and potentially predatory journals.

\(^1\) See list of references at the end.
2. SELECTING QUALITY SOURCES FOR THE ANALYSIS

Once we have our final list of journals, we need to choose the quality sources that we will use to check the journals’ reliability. There are a lot of quality indicators to measure how reliable a health journal is. We selected the following:

1. **Databases:** the fact that a journal is included in any of the following databases is a quality indicator because they all apply strict selection criteria, or simply because they are comprehensive databases that collect *all* the academic journals (or all the academic *open* journals), which means that these sources have a title and an ISSN and are published by academic organisations:

   a. [Journal Citation Report](#)
   b. [Web of Science](#)
   c. [Medline](#)
   d. [Scopus](#)
   e. [MIAR](#)
   f. [Ulrichweb](#)
   g. [DOAJ](#)

2. **Recommendations from editors:** we have selected four different editors’ associations with strict quality criteria for academic journals, and in particular, academic health journals:

   a. [ICMJE](#)
   b. [WAME](#)
   c. [COPE](#)
   d. [ISMTE](#)

3. **Other sources:** according to our aim, we have selected other quality sources, all of them focused on academic journals. These sources are in fact databases that include a list of journals that have been checked against their quality criteria:

   a. [JournalGuide](#)
   b. [Edanz Journal](#)
   c. [JournalTOC](#)
   d. [Retraction Watch](#)
3. COLLATING THE JOURNALS

On the one hand, we have a list of potentially fraudulent health journals whose reliability we want to analyse. On the other hand, we have a selection of quality sources that will be useful for this analysis and for having more information about what these journals are and what their aim is.

Checking journals against all these criteria will allow us to have more information about the quality of the publication and will offer more information to health researchers to select a journal where to publish.

PRESENTATION OF DATA: Airtable

The tool comes as a free software, Airtable, which works similarly to Excel but with more options: present data in the cloud, share them with users, interact with users and embed the tool in WordPress.

HOW TO USE AIRTABLE

Users can access the tool through the UV Library web service: "On no publicar"
1-. First, click on “View larger version” to expand it:
Quality criteria: users can check whether the journal is indexed or meets the quality criteria of a given source (YES/NO)

Source of the journal

2-. **Search for a specific journal**: the tool allows searching by title, ISSN or another data (country, publisher, etc.). Pay attention because most of these journals are scams, that is, you can find fake ISSNs or even no ISSN at all.

The search box is at the top right corner:
3. Get information about a journal: once you have selected a journal, click on “Expand record (space)” and you will see a window with all the information about it.
4.- **Search by subject**: users can search journals by subject by using filters or grouping by field, in the field “Subject”.

![Diagram showing journal search interface with options for sorting and grouping by field](image)
References of journals from specific health works:


References of journals from blacklists:


