Oncology Under Attack by Predatory Journals: A Global Survey

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• Clinical oncology and cancer research are experiencing rapid growth to improve patients’ care.
• This field is, unfortunately, infiltrated by predatory journals (PJs) that are damaging all areas of science as a dark side of the Open Access Movement.
• To our knowledge, only one survey-based study has previously addressed this issue among oncologists, with a geographical restriction to those practicing in Austria and Germany (Richtig et al. 2019 ESMO Open)
• There is limited knowledge on predatory journals in oncology, and no global study has assessed factors associated with this issue of research integrity.

Background

Methods

• We used an anonymized 29 questions-based survey to investigate oncologists’ knowledge on predatory publishing across oncology specialties in a cohort of participants from all the globe with a particular focus on low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).
• Descriptive statistics and logistic regression were used to describe surveyees’ responses and to identify risk factors for predatory publishing as appropriate.
• The null hypotheses (H0) were that the proportions of responses to the questions would not differ between oncologists and cancer researchers located in LMICs and high-income countries (HICs).
• CROSS guidelines were used to report the survey data before publishing.

Survey coverage

60 countries covered including 35 LMICs

Frequency of article solicitations by predatory journals

Predictive factors of publishing in predatory journals based on multivariable logistic regression:

1-Responding to article solicitations of predatory journals: OR=3.56; 95% CI: 1.73-7.33, p=0.001
2-Being an oncologist in an LMIC: OR=2.11; 95% CI: 1.05-4.21, p=0.034
3-Having experience in academic publishing did not reduce the risk of publishing in predatory journals (p=0.008)

Conclusion

• As reported widely in other fields, predatory publishing is also an issue in global oncology.
• Our international survey identified actionable risk factors of vulnerability to predatory publishing, to inform research capacity-building in LMICs.
• This provides the rationale to build training programs to increase awareness on this issue and mark a global change.