

Review of: "Publish or perish: time for a rethink?"

Leire Kortabarria

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Thank you for inviting me to read and comment on this paper.

The authors reflect on an important topic, such as the pressure on academics (in this case, of the medical field) to publish. Authors then alert on the perceived consequences of this, where, in contrast to the traditional publication model based on subscription fees, now researchers have to pay to publish (Article Processing Charges). Authors link this to the emergence and current dominance of Open Access publishing, where publications are freely available, and, with many journals publishing either completely online or simultaneously to print, articles are also universally available. Authors warn of the danger of so-called predatory journals and the abundance of low-level publications, with an impossibility for academics to sift through the mass of publication to discriminate valuable publication.

Authors only hint at alternative models to this, and they do so toward the end of the paper, where free open-access is not dependent on article processing charges on the author. They mention crowdfunding, but there are other formulas as well. They end the article with some solutions that could be explored.

Authors make a direct link between the pressure to publish, the emergence of predatory journals, and the overflow of lower quality publications (mentioning in passing some examples of bad practice, such as self-plagiarism), however, I would suggest that the correlation is more complex than that. Different realities in the publishing field, and the factors at play, seem to intertwine in a not so clear manner. Is the growth in the number of journals published the cause for predatory journals? Is OA truly a factor in increased citations, higher impact, and faster publication times? I would argue that this is not always so - OA can be simply another publication model, with its own advantages and its own challenges. For one, OA does not always rely on APCs, as authors themselves later admit. I would invite authors to delve more into what really is causing the increase in lower-quality publications ("They argue too many journals today rank low in terms of publishing standards in organizing, disseminating, and promoting high quality valuable research"). Is this the consequence of the existence of predatory journals, or is it the other way round? What is factoring into those publications being in the market? I think it would help the debate to clarify the link between the OA model of publishing and the "large variation in the quality of journals and validity of research", if such a link exists and if there is a causation, as the article seems to suggest. I don't think it can be refuted that predatory journals exist, but there are other types of journals which do not fall in the pay-per-read OR in the pay-to-publish models - there is crowdfunding, and there is public financing of journals as well. This phenomenon could be explained as related to, but not caused for or by unethical practices being committed by some academics.

I read this with great interest and I think the authors broach on several important topics which must be discussed in

academic research and publication today. I would like to read more about all these phenomena. I encourage the authors to continue to research, especially on the possible solutions that they envision.