

Peer Review

Review of: "Navigating the Madness of Academic Publishing"

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This well-written opinion highlights important issues that have already been put forward many times concerning academic scientific publications. I fully sympathize with the author about the importance of the topic and the paradoxical situation of the academic publication process. The bottom line is that the publishing industry is highly profitable. This is true for the major publishers that dominate the stage as well as for predatory publishers and mere scammers, which have been proliferating over the recent years, attracted by APCs of OA. The opinion by Guedes depicts scientists as personal victims of this situation. It is only part of the truth. The cost is high for labs and distracts taxpayers' money from investment in research and higher education to the indirect support of publishing companies. Most of the lab money used to pay subscriptions and publication fees comes from grants funded by governments or states or by charities and non-profit organizations. Public or private funding agencies are indirect victims of the publishing cost scandal and will have to be associated with solutions. The positive aspects of existing scientifically stringent journals/editors is that, through the dedication of unpaid scientists, the reviewers, they ensure a certain level of quality control. This may not be enough and has some downsides, but it is better than nothing. The solution advocated by the author "... shifting towards venues controlled by scientists and embracing preprints..." is often heard of, but is incomplete and a bit naive. Editorial boards of high-quality journals are comprised of respectable scientists. Preprints already exist and are an important step forward. Yet these are not enough to improve the situation, whereas there is a need for quality control in the current ocean of publications (e.g., close to 1.8 M publications indexed in PubMed in 2024). The job currently "organized" by the publishing industry could be carried out at a much lower cost if the needed pressure is jointly applied by scientists and research funders, for example, by limiting the maximum cost of APCs and requiring their complete removal for scientists in lower-income countries. This would be less profitable for the industry, but better for science.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.