157 Peer Reviews Fail to Catch Fake Cancer Study

By Dr. Mercola

http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2014/03/27/open-access-journals.aspx?e_cid=2014032 7Z1_nonbuy_DNL_art_1&utm_source=dnl&utm_medium=email&utm_content=art1&utm_campaign=2014032 7Z1_nonbuy&et_cid=DM42851&et_rid=467231421

"The Internet has benefited you with vast access to information that was formerly difficult to come by. However, open access has also generated reduced quality control, sometimes turning the Information Age into the "Age of Misinformation"—especially when it comes to scientific research.

"Fraud, propaganda, and misrepresentations are now commonplace, especially online, and some myths are repeated so often they eventually become accepted as fact.

"Although the featured study and subsequent exposé seeks to discredit open access journals, it too has some very serious conflicting interests. Remember, traditional journals like Science are not immune to publishing flawed studies, and Open Access journals are a direct competition for them, which makes me question the motives of this Science "exposé."

"The featured "sting operation" was concocted by a Science editor who wanted to test how likely it would be for bad research to be published. But before we dig in, it is important to understand what is meant by the term "open access."

21st Century Gives Birth to 'Open Access Journals'

"As the cost of accessing academic journal articles increases, a growing number of academic institutions are building publicly accessible databases of scholarly work. According to the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ),1 Open Access (OA) journals are defined as journals that use a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access.2

"There are no subscription fees to the readers. There are now some 8,250 open access scientific journals in operation worldwide.3 This is a phenomenally positive movement.

"One of the major challenges with traditional journals is that they get all their content for free, most of their peer review editors are not paid as it is an honor to have that role. They typically charge hundreds of dollars a year for a subscription to 12 or fewer issues of their journal, and to top it all off, they charge you $20-$50 or more for just ONE full article.

“This has always seemed to be extraordinarily unfair and like a racket. So just how do these new open access journals cover their expenses? After all, they are not a charitable organization and don’t take donations so they have to collect their fees from somewhere.

“Approximately one-third of these journals charge the author a publication fee. But many times, private authors cannot afford these fees, so they are paid by grant money or other funding sources. Ideally, new papers undergo rigorous peer review before they are published, as described in an article by The Guardian:4

“A national government or a research council gives funds to a university that ultimately passes these monies along to a researcher. The researcher makes a discovery and writes an article about it. The article is then submitted to a journal.

“The journal is responsible for rigorously studying the reported work to make sure it is reliable. This is the heart of quality control: peers – experts working in the same field – anonymously review the work; they challenge it, critique it, ask for new perspectives to be considered, and may even suggest changes in the analysis and presentation.”

“ If Open Access journals are being paid on a “per paper” basis, it is easy to see how the more articles an Open Access journal can publish, the greater their cash flow. To be clear, peer review problems are not limited to Open Access journals—there is failure with traditional journals as well. So the motivation is a bit precarious, but this does not mean it isn’t a better model that serves you and the community better. Some tweaks may need to be added to protect against these risks.

Harvard Journalist Devises Sting Operation

“ In an attempt to test this concern, a science journalist at Harvard University by the name of John Bohannon decided to devise a sting operation to test peer-review quality in the ‘open access media.’

"He created a clever scientific paper riddled with clear scientific anomalies that rendered the study meaningless, and then submitted the paper to 304 open access journals over a period of 10 months. He even used fake names and fake universities, which would be caught by most good-quality peer reviewers."

"The bogus paper described a simple experiment supposedly showing that lichens can slow cancer cell growth.5 With cancer being such a major concern, and many open access journals partial to natural therapies, there may have been a bias to accept this type of novel therapy. More than half the papers—157 of the 304—were accepted for publication. Public Library of Science (PLOS ONE) was the only journal that called attention to the paper's problems and immediately rejected it. Bohannon published the results of his "experiment" in Science Magazine.6

"It is equally important to note that nearly half of the open access journals rejected this fake paper. Ideally, some type of certification agency should do random audits to motivate the half of the journals that weren't as rigid as they needed to be. But make no mistake, Open Access journals are a massive move in the right direction. It is however a newborn and needs some mentoring. To me, this Science "exposé" was more of a hit piece to discredit their competition and increase their revenues, which would limit your access to this type of valuable information.

Most Research Claims Cannot Be Trusted

"As you can see above in my previous interview with Dr. Golomb, the non-Open Access conventional journals are no angels, and most are in bed with the drug companies. Our current medical system has been masterfully orchestrated by the drug industry to give the perception of science when it really is a heavily manipulated process designed to elevate their products and boost their profits.

"Back in 2005, Dr. John Ioannidis, an epidemiologist at Ioannina School of Medicine in Greece, showed that there is less than a 50 percent chance that the results of any randomly chosen scientific paper will be true.7 Interestingly, this is about the same ratio that the hit piece by the Science journalist found in the Open Access journals. But you sure didn't see him quote this information. Within just a few years, one-third of the conclusions of all research will have been

proved wrong by subsequent studies—even research that makes it into the top medical journals.8”

See Mercola’s website for the rest of the story.

http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2014/03/27/open-access-journals.aspx?e_cid=20140327Z1_nonbuy_DNL_art_1&utm_source=dnl&utm_medium=email&utm_content=art1&utm_campaign=20140327Z1_nonbuy&et_cid=DM42851&et_rid=467231421