‘We will publish anything!’ — Here’s how predatory journal mills work

You may have heard the name “predatory journal” before. Academic journals publish the findings and opinions of academics. Scientific journals, in particular, release the results of scientific studies in the form of papers which, we are told, are reviewed prior to publication by peers—fellow scientists in the field who are supposed to scrutinize the manuscript and ensure that bad science doesn’t get a pass. A predatory journal only pretends to do so. It exists solely to make money. It’s like a parasite on the back of the scientific endeavour. What it publishes, then, is of questionable quality.

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Take-home message:

- A predatory journal looks like a genuine academic journal, but it will publish any paper with little to no peer review in exchange for the paper’s authors paying a fee
- Paying to get a paper published is not, however, a sign that a journal is predatory, as this is common practice among legitimate open access journals, whose content is free to be read by anyone
- Some of the signs that a journal is predatory is that its website caters more to authors than to readers, it often sends out invitation emails with flowery language, and its scope is much broader than would be expected, publishing papers on nuclear physics, geography and nursing, for example

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