LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Open Access Journals: Open for Rich, Closed for Poor

Sir,

Since the past two decades, the scientific journal publishing has undergone an actual rebellion empowered by the emergence of the global web publications. The publishers are swiftly shifting from print publication to Open Access Journals (OAJ). These journals appeared in early 1990s, and after the year 2000 an increasing number of professional OA publishers have emerged and established as an industry.1 The OA publishers seem to offer many flavours of their publications including indexing with reputable indexing bodies, fast tract peer review and publication within 4-6 weeks. These publishers are cashed to attract manuscripts with huge publication charges from the authors or institutions. The journals having high impact factor are charging more publication cost ($2330) compared to journals they have low impact factor ($1540).2

As per Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), there are 9752 OAJ, from them 2759 (28.29%) are charging obligatory and 378 (3.87%) are conditionally charging the article processing fees and also an approximate publication charges from the authors or institutions. The journals having high impact factor are charging more publication cost ($2330) compared to journals they have low impact factor ($1540).2

The leading OPA publishers never discuss the actual costs although the organizations are profitable as a whole, but some emerging players say that their real internal costs are extremely low. “An open-access publisher published 22,000 articles at a cost of $290 per article, another publisher published with an average costs of $300 and also the costs are in the low hundreds of dollars per article”.4 It is believed that an approximate publication cost of $200 - 250 is acceptable but the cost of $1300 - 5000 is not possible to get acceptance from authors.

The main actors in a research paper are an author, editor and reviewers. An author working for a long time without getting any financial benefits gets frustrated as the financial credit goes to publishers. DORA declaration appeared at a time when the issue of OAJ needs attention which is continuously scratching the back of authors.

We cannot deny the role of OAJ publishers and not saying that publishers should not get paid. The aim of the academic journals would be to make the best research available widely. As for the hefty OAJ fees, this is not only incongruous but to some extent it also hampers the research as well as science. The journals which are charging such exorbitant fees are surely not “open” but these journals are open for rich and closed for poor.

Acknowledgement: Thankful to the College of Medicine Research Centre, Deanship of Scientific Research, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for supporting the work.

REFERENCES