

## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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).<sup>2</sup>

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 of about \$1300 to \$3000. These journals have one million article-level entries.<sup>3</sup> Some are charging an article cost of \$5000, some a cost \$1350 to publish an article and some are publishing page based charges about \$495 per page.<sup>4</sup> My main concern is that, the amount is required for the availability of an article through the web access is simply in a double figure. But, these journals are charging enormous amount for publication. In many developing countries still, the monthly salary of a senior science faculty (Professor) in public sector institutes is less than \$1000 / month. How is it possible the researchers from the developing countries can publish their papers in such journals? Most of OPA journals are playing a role of growing as an industry and generating income rather than actual science dissemination.

I explored this question from one of the senior Professors in Pakistan. He said that he would never publish in a journal which is asking for publication amount of \$1000/= and prefer to spend this amount on family members. An Indian Professor of Pharmacology said that he would never publish paper in journals charging hefty publication fees; he likes to use this money on his children's education rather than publishing a paper in an OAJ.

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".<sup>4</sup> 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.

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*Sultan Ayoub Meo*

*Department of Physiology, College of Medicine, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.*

*Correspondence: Prof. Sultan Ayoub Meo, Department of Physiology, College of Medicine, King Saud University, P. O. Box 2925, Riyadh-11461, Saudi Arabia.*

*E-mail: sultanmeo@hotmail.com*

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