



Print version

# Questionable journals

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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>1 The origin of untrustworthy journals</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 The recommended approach for evaluating a journal</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 Checking formal criteria . . . . .	2
2.1.1 Access to full text . . . . .	2
2.1.2 Article processing charges . . . . .	4
2.1.3 Description of peer-review process . . . . .	5
2.1.4 Affiliation of editorial-board members . . . . .	7
2.1.5 The name of the editor-in-chief included . . . . .	10
2.1.6 Unambiguous identification of the publisher . . . . .	11
2.1.7 The journal provides an ISSN on its website and the ISSN is valid . . . . .	11
2.1.8 Accurate information about the journal's citation metrics in the Journal Citation Reports and Scopus . . . . .	13
2.1.9 Accurate information about indexation in Web of Science and Scopus . . . . .	17
2.1.10 Providing misleading citation metrics . . . . .	18
2.1.11 Assessment Table . . . . .	20
2.2 Evaluating the professional quality of a journal . . . . .	22
2.3 Learning about the journal's operating procedures . . . . .	24
<b>3 Author mills – dubious practices with monographs</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>4 Conclusion</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>30</b>

# Introduction

In recent years authors of scholarly publications face the risk of publishing their work with a bogus publisher or in an untrustworthy journal. In practice, the term “predatory” is widely used to denote these publishers. However, with regard to the fact that such publishers do not comply with the principles of transparency and best practices in scholarly publishing, the use of terms such as untrustworthy, bogus, and suspicious is increasing. For that reason we use the terms untrustworthy journal and bogus publisher in this study material.

The main aim of bogus publishers and untrustworthy journals is easy financial gain. Therefore, they eschew the usual peer-review process before publishing a text, they create fictitious editorial boards, imitate the names of well-established, credible journals, etc. As a result of this behaviour, the academic community is deluged with a large amount of unverified and even distorted or false information. Now more than ever, there is an urgent need for institutions and researchers to be informed about the vital necessity of evaluating a publisher and journal before submitting their article. For example, already today the *Committee for Evaluation of Research Organisations and Completed Programmes* has information that in the past, even texts published by bogus publishers have been evaluated. For example, in March 2016, the *Student Chamber of the Council of Higher Education Institutions* informed the Council about such a case at a meeting with the members of the Council.

With regard to the above-mentioned facts, informing academics about how to detect untrustworthy journals is the most effective protection against publishing in such journals. Only then will awareness spread through academia about the risks of publishing in untrustworthy journals that were created merely for the purpose of financial gain.

The aim of this study material is to summarize the basic facts about where untrustworthy journals come from and possible ways for detecting them.

# 1 The origin of untrustworthy journals

Untrustworthy journals sponge on the otherwise noble concept of the Open Access movement, which aims to disseminate credible specialized information freely to the research community. Open Access strives for unrestricted access to literature, limited neither by financial nor by technical barriers, and its aim is to publish research results that underwent a regular peer-review process before being published.

A part of publishing in the Open Access mode is covering the costs for editing and typesetting of the texts, fees for server operation, etc. Therefore, today authors can use two modes of Open Access publishing for submitting their work to a scholarly journal:

## Open-Access Journal

Such journals offer full texts of their articles to readers on the internet free of charge while the costs for publication of the article are covered either by the author (so-called Article Processing Charges or APCs), or by the institution which publishes the respective journal (for example Central European Journal of Nursing and Midwifery published by the University of Ostrava).

## Hybrid Open-Access Journal

In these journals, access to the journal's content is not free of charge by default, but authors have the possibility to publish their article in the Open Access mode if they pay a fee for it.

## The Emergence of Untrustworthy Journals

Untrustworthy journals emerged with the aim to exploit the Open Access mode. While proper journals in the OA mode observe the common practices of scholarly publishing (peer-review, specialists in their international editorial board, etc.), untrustworthy journals not only violate these practices, but they also often try to trick potential authors into publishing their articles with them (e.g. they create fictitious editorial boards, imitate titles of prestigious journals, perform a speedy review process, etc.). The sole aim of all these practices is to make authors publish in their journal in order to collect a fee from these authors.

The year 2008 brought the first mention of untrustworthy journals, although they were not yet termed untrustworthy. At that time, the person who drew attention to them was Tim Hill, the owner of the New Zealand publishing house Dove Medical Press publishing in the Open Access mode. In 2010, Jeffrey Beall, a librarian from the American University of Colorado Denver, published on his (now-defunct) blog *Scholarly Open Access* a list of bogus journals' publishers and a list of untrustworthy journals, the so-called Beall's list. Two years later, he proposed criteria by which untrustworthy publishers could be identified. Beall updated these criteria and lists until mid-January 2017 when he cancelled the blog (therefore only a link to its archived version is provided).

Although Beall's List gained popularity in the academic community because of the possibility of determining quickly and easily whether a journal is listed there or not, its main flaw was a lack of transparency. Jeffrey Beall defined 55 criteria of untrustworthy journals, but many of these criteria proved to be controversial, because they are either difficult to verify or their evaluation is subjective.

The method for journal evaluation that we have provided since 2017 to scholars and PhD students at the University Campus Bohunice has repeatedly undergone critical discussion, which resulted in its current 10 objectively verifiable criteria. In the following parts of this study material, we present these 10 criteria in context with the respective criteria from Beall's list. In this way we want to help you understand that journal evaluation is not just black and white, and a complex approach is necessary.

# 2 The recommended approach for evaluating a journal

If you want to eliminate the risk of publishing in an untrustworthy journal, it is indispensable that you perform these three steps:

1. Check objectively verifiable formal criteria of transparency principles and ethics of scholarly publishing. This step includes checking 10 criteria which are described in detail in the following sections. We recommend recording the resulting number of points for each criterion on an evaluation chart.
2. Perform a content analysis of the journal, i.e. read a couple of the journal's volumes and, based on your own expert knowledge or with the help of check lists (see section 2.2)), evaluate the professional quality of the published articles.
3. Search on the internet. There are various websites where scholars share experience with publishing. In this way you can gain insight into the quality of the respective journal's editorial work (see section 2.3)). As a part of this evaluation step you should also familiarize yourself with how the databases Web of Science, JCR, and Scopus evaluate the journal.

The following sections describe the individual, above-mentioned steps of the approach for a detailed evaluation of a journal.

## 2.1 Checking formal criteria

In the first step, you should check ten criteria which can be objectively verified and are based on transparency principles and ethics of scholarly publishing determined by authorities in publication ethics, namely COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics), DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals), OASPA (Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association) and WAME (World Association Medical Editors). When evaluating a journal, we recommend using an evaluating chart either in its online version or as an Excel file.

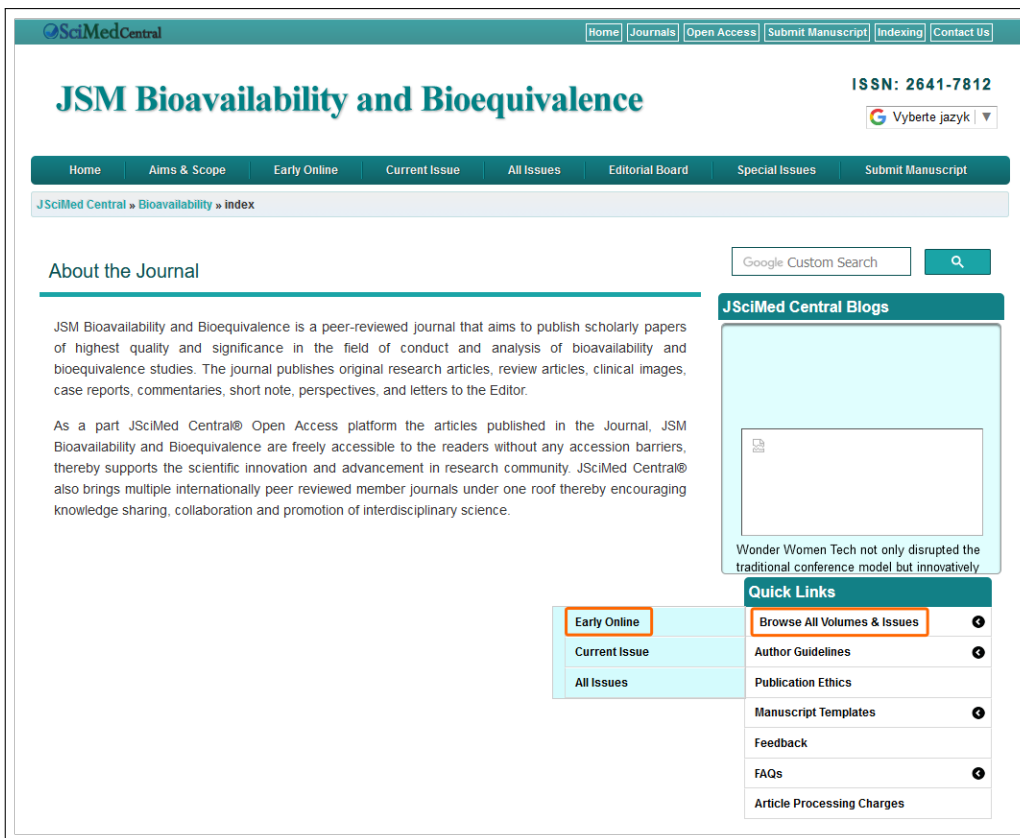
In the following subchapters, it is explained why the respective criteria should be evaluated and how to proceed. We have also included examples of journals that violate the respective criterion. When evaluating these criteria with the help of the evaluation chart, you should proceed as follows. Start by verifying on the journal's website whether a criterion is met or not (e.g. you can verify the presence of an ISSN by looking at the main page of the website or subpages thereof with information about the journal). When the criterion is met, the journal gains 1 point, while when the criterion is not met (even partly) the journal gains 0 points. A journal with 10 points can be considered fully transparent.

However, in real life scholars often learn that some of the criteria are occasionally violated even by well-established journals. This is why the journal evaluation approach recommended in this study material includes two more evaluation steps: an assessment of the professional quality of the journal and an effort to find information about the journal's operation and how it solves possible violations of publication ethics.

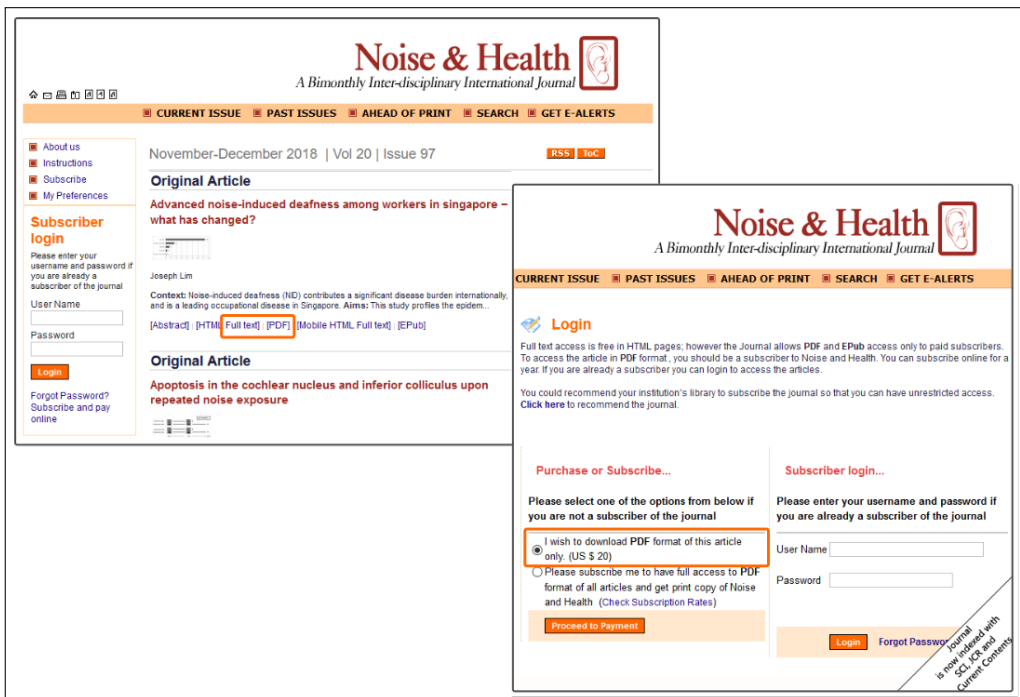
### 2.1.1 Access to full text

The first criterion to check is the free access to full texts as the primary goal of Open Access journals. When validating this criterion you should focus on whether a journal in Open Access mode really provides access to the full texts of its articles. Keep in mind that a number of journals provided access to their full texts on the basis of subscription in the past, and only later did they adopt the Open Access mode. Therefore, it is advisable to focus on availability of full texts in the current issue or volume.

Although evaluating this criterion may seem straightforward, unfortunately cases may appear when you hesitate whether you should deem it fulfilled or not. For example, in the journal *JSM Bioavailability and Bioequivalence*, this criterion will be clearly evaluated as unfulfilled because, after selecting the current issue in the menu on journal's website, the homepage "About the Journal" loads again instead of the page with articles for download.



However, the evaluation of the journal Noise & Health may be controversial, because it provides access to its articles in HTML format for free while for a PDF version of articles it charges 20 USD. One person may consider the availability of full text in HTML format to represent a fulfilled criterion while another person might assess the criterion more strictly and expect completely free access to the full text regardless of its format in the open-access mode.



## 2.1.2 Article processing charges

In the context of article processing charges (APCs), untrustworthy journals are connected with practices such as non-transparent information about APCs or providing information about them only after the fact (a surprise in the form of unexpected invoices). The amount of APCs may also be very low and therefore cannot cover the costs for publishing an article.

Although it was found that the average cost imposed by western publishers to publish an article is approximately 500 EUR, it cannot be considered a universal guideline which distinguishes untrustworthy journals from the others, because the economies of various countries differ. The amount of APCs as a criterion is disputable for one more reason: today there are many untrustworthy journals that require an APC amount similar to that of traditional publishers (see below the example *Journal of Immunobiology* × *Immunobiology*).

	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Journal of Imaging and Interventional Radiology</td> <td>2471-8564</td> <td>519</td> <td>48</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Journal of Immunobiology</td> <td>2476-1966</td> <td>1819</td> <td>17</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Journal of Immunological Techniques &amp; Infectious Diseases</td> <td>2329-9541</td> <td>1219</td> <td>11</td> </tr> </table>	Journal of Imaging and Interventional Radiology	2471-8564	519	48	Journal of Immunobiology	2476-1966	1819	17	Journal of Immunological Techniques & Infectious Diseases	2329-9541	1219	11
Journal of Imaging and Interventional Radiology	2471-8564	519	48										
Journal of Immunobiology	2476-1966	1819	17										
Journal of Immunological Techniques & Infectious Diseases	2329-9541	1219	11										
	<p><b>Gold Open Access Publication Fee</b></p> <p>To provide gold open access, this journal has a publication fee which needs to be met by the authors or their research funders for each article published open access. The gold open access publication fee for this journal is USD 2350, excluding taxes.</p>												

While the difference in the amount of APCs in *Journal of Immunobiology* and *Immunobiology* is only 531 USD, the first journal is published by the publisher OMICS that was sentenced to pay a fine of 50 million USD for unfair publication practices.

When assessing the APC criterion you should determine whether the journal states the exact amount of APCs clearly and intelligibly. It is typical of untrustworthy journals that they provide the amount of APCs together with some note – usually on the same page – in which the publisher reserves the right to charge additional fees.

As an example the publishing house Allied Academies may serve (see below). Publishing an article here requires not only paying APCs but also for membership in an unspecified organization with a yearly fee of 75 USD.

**allied academies** A Global Community Dedicated to Research and Teaching

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### Journal Submission Instructions

There are two approaches to manuscript submission for any of our family of journals. The first approach is the traditional one, which we call Direct Submission. The second is to submit a manuscript which has been accepted for presentation at one of our conferences for journal publication consideration, a process we call Accelerated Journal Review (AJR) process.

[Direct Submissions](#) | [Accelerated Review Submissions](#) | [General Comments](#)

#### Direct Submissions

To submit your paper for direct consideration, please use the [Direct Journal Submission \(DJS\)](#) form (the contact author will need to have a user profile and be prompted to log in to access this form). You will receive a confirmation email at that time to let you know that your submission has been received along with a tracking number to use for future inquiries.

**KVŮLI ÚSPĚRĚ MÍSTĀ VYNECHÁNA ČÁST PŮVODNÍHO TEXTU**

In general, our Editors strive for a 25% acceptance rate on direct submissions. The referee process normally requires about two to three months. There is no submission fee, but ALL authors of manuscripts which are accepted for publication must become members of the appropriate Academy prior to publication of the manuscript. Membership fees are currently \$75 per year, payable online at the [Join an Academy](#) page.

#### Accelerated Journal Review Submissions

**To be eligible for Accelerated Journal Review (AJR), at least one author must have registered for physical or Internet participation in one of our four regularly scheduled Conferences each year.** Instructions for Accelerated Journal Review submission are emailed to Conference registrants when the registration fee is paid.

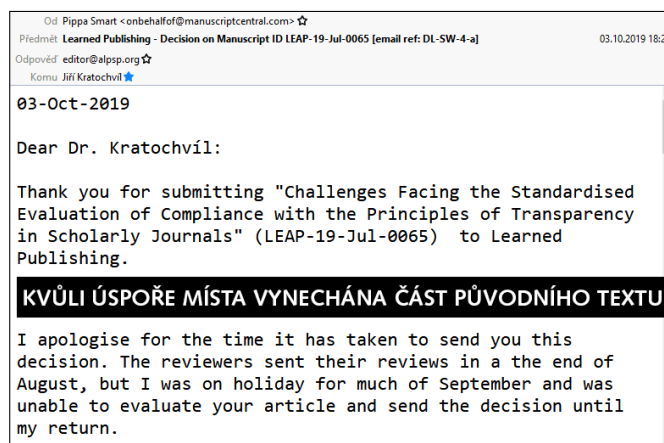
The Accelerated Journal Review process is double blind refereed, and it also strives to produce an acceptance rate of 25%. Members of the various Editorial Boards who have volunteered to participate in the accelerated review process evaluate the submissions and the process is completed within approximately two weeks from the submission date. Registrants will be notified via email of the results. Because of the accelerated process, much more limited referee comments are available. A manuscript which has been submitted for accelerated consideration and failed to be selected can be revised and resubmitted for a follow up review.

There are no formatting requirements for journal/award submissions, however, we do request that each submission contain a cover page with the paper title, author names, affiliations, and at least one email address. This cover page will be removed before the file is sent out for review. We also ask that the paper be single spaced. Any manuscript accepted for publication in a journal must be formatted in accordance with our [Publication Guidelines](#) and must fall within our other guidelines with respect to language, grammar and length. All authors of manuscripts which are accepted for publication must become members of the appropriate Academy prior to publication of the manuscript. Membership fees are currently \$75 per year, payable online at the [Join an Academy](#) page.

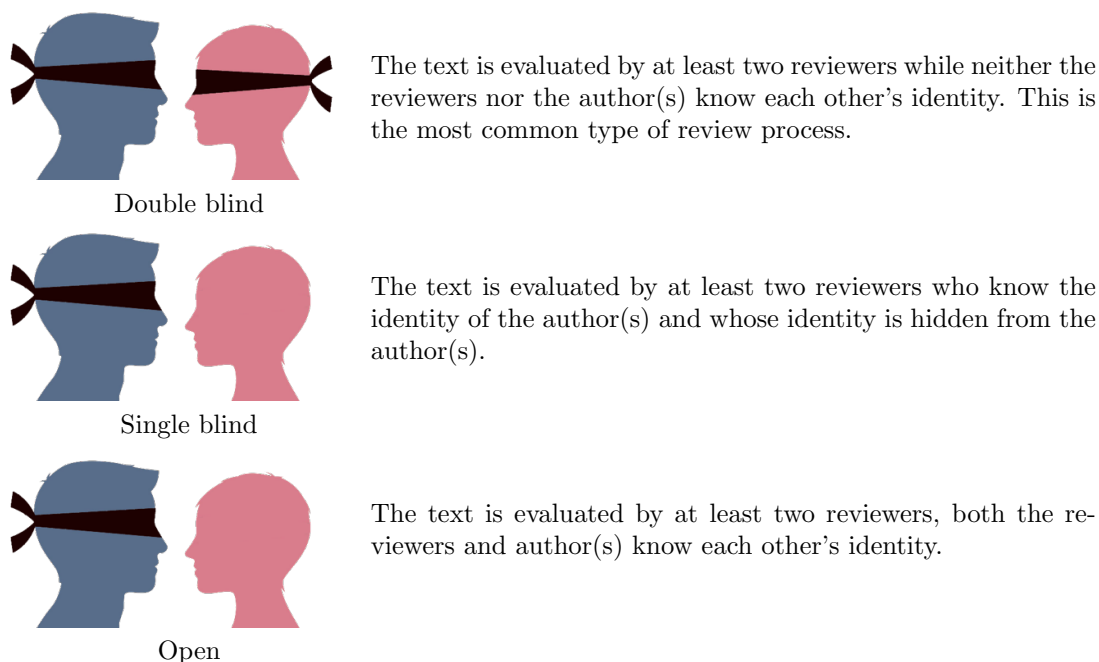


### 2.1.3 Description of peer-review process

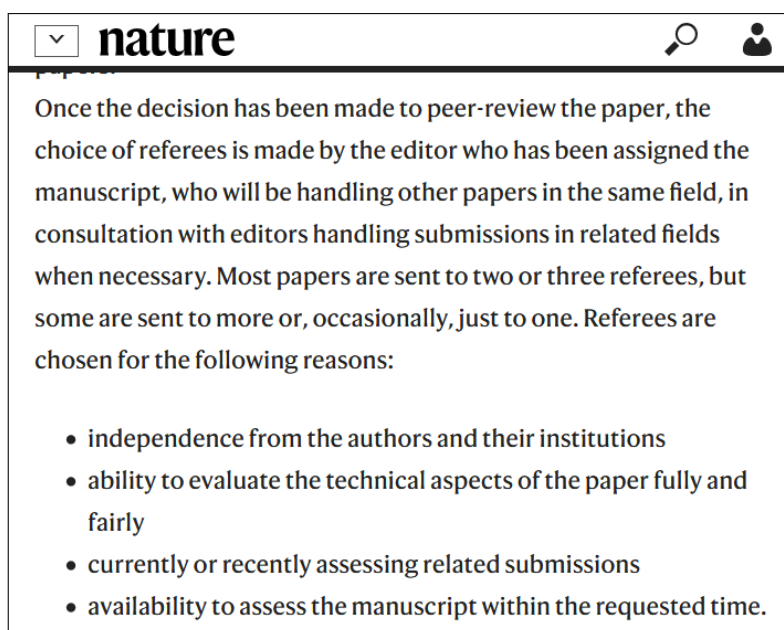
Although it is commonly stated that untrustworthy journals usually have a very short peer-review process (a matter of days), in reality this criterion is questionable as well. On one hand, writing a review may take only a few hours, but on the other hand, the total length of the peer-review process may be influenced by searching for a suitable reviewer or by the reviewers being busy. For example, it follows from the e-mail below that if the editor of the journal had not been on holiday, the review process could have been shorter by a whole month.



When evaluating this criterion, you should find out whether a sample of the peer-review process is provided on the journal's website, so that you have a precise idea about its course. This means finding a page on the journal's website with information for authors or with the journal's ethical principles, and there you should look to see whether the journal describes the course of peer review in detail. There are three types of peer-review process:



The editorial board is one of the key parts of a journal. It is a decision-making body determining both the content and thematic focus of the journal. It also develops strategies and visions which the journal follows in its publishing. The editorial board's prestige reflects the quality of the whole periodical. In the context of untrustworthy journals, the editorial board is connected with the criteria mentioned below, though these criteria are generally problematic.

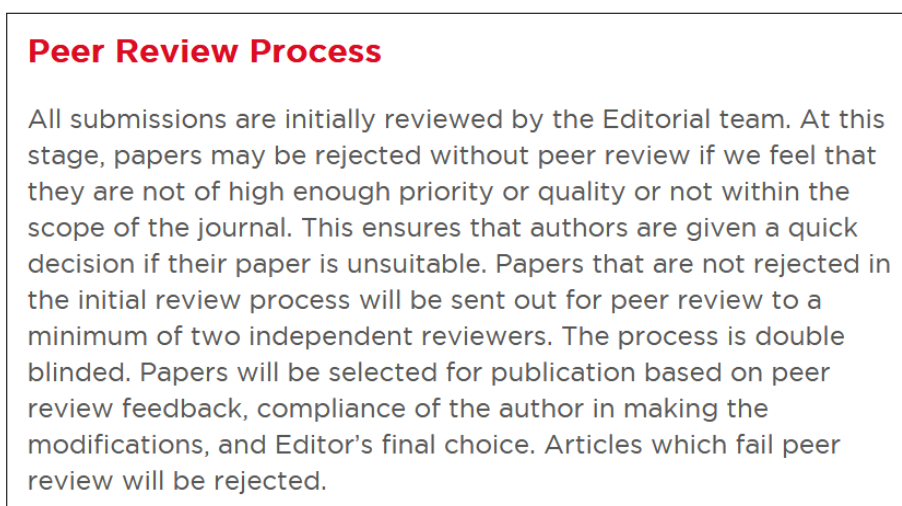
A screenshot of a web page from the journal Nature. The header shows the Nature logo, a search icon, and a user profile icon. The main text describes the peer-review process, stating that once a decision is made to peer-review a paper, the editor chooses referees. It lists four reasons for choosing referees: independence from authors, ability to evaluate technical aspects, currently assessing related submissions, and availability to assess within the requested time.

▼ nature

Once the decision has been made to peer-review the paper, the choice of referees is made by the editor who has been assigned the manuscript, who will be handling other papers in the same field, in consultation with editors handling submissions in related fields when necessary. Most papers are sent to two or three referees, but some are sent to more or, occasionally, just to one. Referees are chosen for the following reasons:

- independence from the authors and their institutions
- ability to evaluate the technical aspects of the paper fully and fairly
- currently or recently assessing related submissions
- availability to assess the manuscript within the requested time.

In this example from the journal *Nature*, a short sample from a comprehensive description of the peer-review process in the instructions for authors is provided.

A screenshot of a document section titled 'Peer Review Process' in red. The text describes the initial review process, where submissions are reviewed by the Editorial team. Papers may be rejected without peer review if they are not of high enough priority or quality or not within the scope of the journal. Papers not rejected in the initial review process will be sent out for peer review to a minimum of two independent reviewers. The process is double blinded. Papers will be selected for publication based on peer review feedback, compliance of the author in making the modifications, and Editor's final choice. Articles which fail peer review will be rejected.

**Peer Review Process**

All submissions are initially reviewed by the Editorial team. At this stage, papers may be rejected without peer review if we feel that they are not of high enough priority or quality or not within the scope of the journal. This ensures that authors are given a quick decision if their paper is unsuitable. Papers that are not rejected in the initial review process will be sent out for peer review to a minimum of two independent reviewers. The process is double blinded. Papers will be selected for publication based on peer review feedback, compliance of the author in making the modifications, and Editor's final choice. Articles which fail peer review will be rejected.

More commonly, you will find a briefer yet sufficient description, which includes the most important information, i.e. the fact that the article undergoes a peer-review process and what type of review process it is (here double blind).

## Standard Editorial Processing and Peer-Review Policy

Manuscripts are submitted for evaluation at the online portal. The authors are provided with password to access and track their article progress. The manuscript ID is generated and sent to the corresponding author. This is followed by preliminary evaluation of the article where the scope of the manuscript and its conformity with the journal mandate is checked. It also involved checking of non-duplicity and originality. If the manuscript is found out of scope or the content is not comprehensible, then it is sent for re-submission provided significant modifications are made. After screening for suitability and determination of the communication type, the Editor-in-Chief sends the manuscript to the Managing Editor. A minimum of two potential and active Peer-Reviewers are identified and the manuscript is subjected for peer-review. Substantial time of about three weeks is allocated for completion of subject expert evaluation of the manuscript content. Based on the review comments, suggestions and recommendations, the Editor-in-Chief in consultation with the handling Editor and Reviewers arrive at a final decision (Accept/Re-review/Minor revision/Major revision/rejection) and the corresponding author is duly notified. Accepted articles are processed for generation of author proof followed by online web hoisting.

By contrast the journal *Current Issues in Molecular Biology* does not provide any information about the course of the peer-review process. This example also demonstrates that you cannot rely on the fact that databases such as Scopus and JCR list only reliable journals because this journal has an impact factor assigned in Journal Citation Reports, though it clearly lacks a description of the peer-review process.

### 2.1.4 Affiliation of editorial-board members

The editorial board is one of the key parts of a journal, it is a decision-making body with respect to the content and thematic focus of the journal. It also develops strategies and visions which the journal follows in its publishing. The editorial board's prestige reflects the quality of the whole periodical. In the context of untrustworthy journals, editorial board is connected with the below-mentioned criteria; however, they are mostly problematic.

**Criteria**

The same editorial board for a whole portfolio of journals

Fictitious members of editorial boards

Well-known and successful researchers are included among the editorial-board members without their knowledge.

The editorial board has only a few members or it is not international and its members come mainly from developing countries

Affiliation of the editorial-board members is not accurate

**Questionability of criteria**

As there are several thousand journals, it is practically impossible to ascertain whether one editorial board is connected with multiple journals.

This criterion can only be verified by searching for the board members on the websites of their institutions. Besides the time-consuming nature of verifying this criterion, especially when the editorial board has many members, not all institutions provide information about their employees or students due to personal data protection.

Not all scholars provide information about their membership on the website of their institution. Reasons for this may vary (e.g. the design of their institution's website does not allow it, lack of interest on the side of the author, no obligation to provide such information, etc.). Therefore, this criterion can only be verified by contacting the scholar directly. The question remains to what extent are scholars willing to reply to questions regarding their membership on editorial boards.

In terms of the number of editorial-board members, authorities such as COPE, DOAJ, OASPA and WAME do not set out any standard for whether this criterion is violated or fulfilled.

Even the prevalence of people from developing countries on the editorial board and the implied lower quality of editorial work is controversial. Under globalization, an increasing number of representatives from third countries on editorial boards is a natural development. In particular, there are many regional journals whose editorial-board members are mostly from the respective region, yet such journals are not lacking in professional quality.

This is the only criterion associated with the editorial board which we recommend checking, although we are aware that even this criterion may be problematic. As follows from the sample below, even such a prestigious journal as *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians* with the highest impact factor (223.679 v r. 2018) does not provide the full affiliation (i.e. institution and state/city) of its editorial-board members but only their institutions. In the case of strict control, this would mean that in terms of formal criteria, this journal would be evaluated as untrustworthy. Nevertheless, we recommend checking this criterion, because only with full affiliation can an author or reader identify an editorial-board member unimpeachably. At the same time, this is also a criterion set by the COPE, DOAJ, OASPA and WAME authorities.


Wiley Online Library

Access by Masaryk University

See

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CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians



HOME
ABOUT ▾
CONTRIBUTE ▾
BROWSE ▾

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Editorial Board

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<p><b>Editor</b>            Ted Gansler, MD, MBA,            MPH            American Cancer Society</p> <p><b>Associate Editors</b>            Durado Brooks, MD,            MPH            American Cancer Society</p> <p>Keith A. Delman, MD,            FACS            Winship Cancer Institute            of Emory University</p>	<p><b>Senior Director, Journals and Books            Publishing</b>            Esmeralda Galán Buchanan            American Cancer Society</p> <p><b>Managing Editor</b>            Jin Hee Kim            American Cancer Society</p>	<p><b>Publisher</b>            Shawn Morton            Wiley</p> <p><b>Senior Production            Editor</b>            Rich Nagurka            Wiley</p>
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EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

<p>Walter J. Curran, Jr., MD            Winship Cancer Institute of            Emory University</p> <p>Gini Fleming, MD            University of Chicago Medicine</p> <p>Susan Gapstur, PhD, MPH            American Cancer Society</p> <p>Frederick L. Greene, MD            Levine Cancer Institute</p>	<p>Cathy Meade, PhD, RN,            FAAN            Moffitt Cancer Center</p> <p>Kevin Oeffinger, MD            Duke University School            of Medicine</p> <p>William K. Oh, MD            Mount Sinai School of            Medicine</p>	<p>William Phelps, PhD            American Cancer Society</p> <p>Charles R. Thomas, Jr., MD            Oregon Health and Science            University</p> <p>Andrew J. Vickers, PhD            Memorial Sloan-Kettering            Cancer Center</p>
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### 2.1.5 The name of the editor-in-chief included

Following the preceding criterion, you should also check whether the journal provides clear information about its editor-in-chief either on its website or in the journal itself. Like in any other normally operating organization, journals must have a person responsible for certain processes. Whether an article is accepted or declined is decided by the editor-in-chief of the journal.

The screenshot shows the Hindawi website for the journal *Parkinson's Disease*. The page is titled "Editorial Board" and lists 20 academic editors. The sidebar on the right includes journal metrics, APC, and a "Submit" button.

**Journal metrics**

Acceptance rate	42%
Submission to final decision	112 days
Acceptance to publication	53 days
CiteScore	2.270
Impact Factor	2.051

**APC** \$1650

**Submit** →

**Author guidelines**
















**Editorial board**

**Databases and indexing**

**Sign up for content alerts**

**Sign up**

**Academic Editors**

- **Jan Aasly** , Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway
- **Francois Alesch**, Medical University of Vienna, Austria
- **Cristine Alves da Costa** , Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, France
- **Ivan Bodis-Wollner**, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, USA
- **Carlo Colosimo**, Santa Maria University Hospital, Italy
- **Seyed-Mohammad Fereshtehnejad** , Karolinska Institute, Sweden
- **Carlo Ferrarese** , University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy
- **Francisco Grandas** , Hospital General Universitario Gregorio Marañón, Spain
- **Peter Hagell** , Kristianstad University, Sweden
- **Nobutaka Hattori**, Juntendo University, Japan
- **Marjan Jahanshahi** , UCL Institute of Neurology, United Kingdom
- **Elan D. Louis**, Yale University, USA
- **Graziella Madeo** , National Institutes of Health, USA
- **Giuseppina Martella** , Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata, Italy
- **Pablo Mir** , Universidad de Sevilla, Spain
- **Giovanni Mirabella** , La Sapienza University, Italy
- **Maral M. Mouradian**, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, USA
- **Antonio Pisani** , University of Rome Tor Vergata, Italy
- **Fabrizio Stocchi**, IRCCS San Raffaele, Italy
- **Stefano Tamburin** , University of Verona, Italy
- **Eng King Tan** , National Neuroscience Institute, Singapore
- **Hélio Teive** , Federal University of Paraná, Brazil
- **Karsten Witt**, Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg, Germany

On the website of the journal *Parkinson's Disease*, only information about the editorial board is available, but no mention of the editor-in-chief can be found.

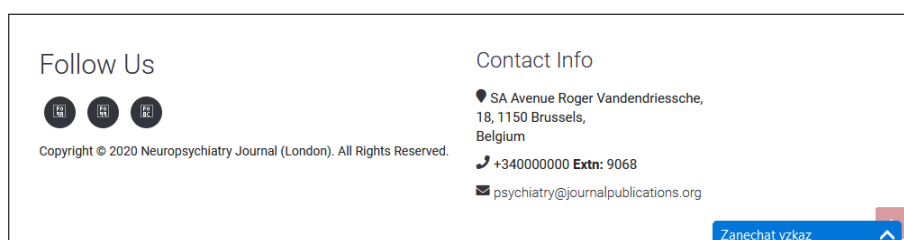
### 2.1.6 Unambiguous identification of the publisher

A common practice of untrustworthy journals is that instead of providing unambiguous information about their publisher, they either do not mention the publisher at all or they replace it with the name of the journal. Being able to unambiguously identify the publisher is vital because it helps the reader or potential author learn who owns the journal. In this way authors immediately get an idea about the expected quality of the editorial work, especially when the owner is a traditional publishing house such as Elsevier, Springer, etc.

When verifying this criterion, the publisher can commonly be found in the footer of the website with information about copyright. In the example below, the website footer of the journal *Medicine* includes a statement that the publisher is Wolters Kluwer Health, Inc. The name of the publisher serves also as a link to its website.



By contrast, the website of the journal *Neuropsychiatry* mentions in the footer only the name of the journal and next to it an address without any addressee.



### 2.1.7 The journal provides an ISSN on its website and the ISSN is valid

The ISSN (International Standard Serial Number) provides important information about a journal, because it is an unambiguous identifier which prevents readers as well as potential authors from confusing journals with similar titles. When verifying this criterion, first the ISSN of the journal must be found and then checked on the ISSN Portal (<https://portal.issn.org/>). One should verify whether the journal can be retrieved on this portal according to its ISSN and whether the information recorded in the ISSN corresponds to that included on the website of the journal (e.g. information about the publisher, the frequency of the journal's publication, etc.).

When trying to find the ISSN, you need to inspect the website of the journal very thoroughly, because it may not be easy to find at first sight.

You can see this in the following examples. While the journal *World Psychiatry* provides its ISSN right in the heading of its website...

Wiley Online Library | Access by Masaryk University

Wiley Editing Services  
Submit your manuscript with confidence

World Psychiatry  
OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE WORLD PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION (WPA)

Editor: Professor Mario Maj, Naples, Italy  
Impact factor: 34.024  
ISI Journal Citation Reports © Ranking: 2018: 1/146 (Psychiatry); 1/142 (Psychiatry (Social Science))  
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Volume 19, Issue 1  
February 2020

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... the journal *Nature* placed this information just above the footer of its website and only in small print.

Compendex  
15 February 2020 – 17 February 2020  
Shenzhen, China

ICSCA 2020 9th International  
Conference on Software and Computer  
Applications (ICSCA 2020)--Ei  
Compendex, Scopus

18 February 2020 – 21 February 2020  
Langkawi, Malaysia

Issue Cover Cover image: DeepMind Technologies Ltd

Nature | ISSN 1476-4687 (online)

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Sometimes finding the ISSN may be complicated. For example, the journal *Cell* does not provide its ISSN either on its homepage, or on any subpages in the About section, where the reader would commonly expect such information, but instead only on the page with information about subscriptions.



### 2.1.8 Accurate information about the journal's citation metrics in the Journal Citation Reports and Scopus

One of the most distinctive features of untrustworthy journals is an effort to deliberately confuse authors by falsely proclaiming metrics that have allegedly been assigned to the journal in the databases Journal Citation Reports (JCR) and Scopus. While the JCR database calculates the impact factor for journals indexed there, Scopus calculates three metrics for their journals – CiteScore, SNIP and SJR (we discuss metrics in a separate study material).

Untrustworthy journals present on their websites the value of certain metrics, the names of which are similar to the above-mentioned metrics (e.g. Global Impact Factor, Journal Impact Factor). The aim is to lure authors into publishing their articles in an untrustworthy journal and collect article processing charges. With regard to evaluation of scholarly achievements and the author's prestige, publishing in a journal with impact factor in particular is a great motivation. Therefore, untrustworthy journals take advantage of this and try to mislead authors by providing metrics with names similar to the metrics provided by JCR and Scopus on their websites.

In this case verifying this criterion is very easy, because any time you encounter a journal providing metrics of a similar name like impact factor, CiteScore, SNIP and SJR, just search for the journal in JCR or Scopus and check whether the journal is listed there and has a current value of the respective metrics. Here you need to remember that the values of the metrics are published with a certain delay. For example, impact factor is commonly published in June or July. Therefore, the most recent value in the first half of 2020 will be for the year 2018, and in the second half for 2019.

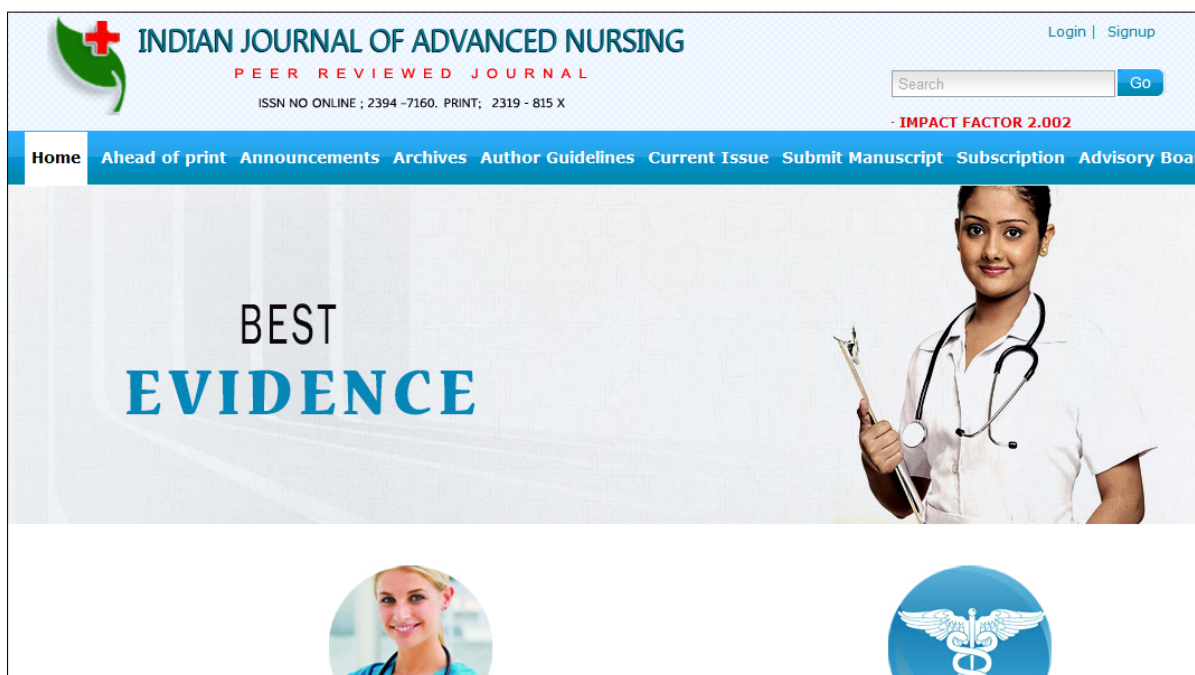
Journals commonly provide citation metrics on their website or in the section about indexation in databases. In the below-mentioned example with the journal China-USA Business Review, the metrics are provided in the section Indexing. In this case the metric's name JIFACTOR may indicate either an effort to mislead authors by deliberately providing metrics with a name similar to the official one or providing false metrics (for more information about false metrics, see below).

The screenshot shows the David Publishing Company website. The header includes the logo and the tagline "From Knowledge to Wisdom". A navigation menu contains links for Home, Journals, Books, Conferences, Services, Submission, Subscription, and Contact. On the left, there is a "Paper Status Tracking" section with a search box and a "Notice" section with links to "About This Journal", "Editorial Board Members", "Reviewers", "Guidelines", "Publication Ethics Statement", "Indexing", "Submission", and "Subscription". The main content area is titled "Journals" and features a card for "China-USA Business Review". The card includes a cover image, the journal title, ISSN: 1537-1514, website URL (http://www.davidpublisher.org/Home/Journal/CUBR), frequency (quarterly), and volume information (Volume 18, Number 3, July-Sept. 2019 (Serial Number 185)). Below the card is an "Indexing" section listing various databases: Google Scholar, H-index list (H5: 12/11), WebQualis/Capes index, Brazil (Classification B3/B4), Index Copernicus, Poland, JIFACTOR (JIF: 0.5), and ANVUR (Italian National Agency for Evaluation of University and research Institutes), Italy. An orange arrow points to the "JIFACTOR (JIF: 0.5)" entry.

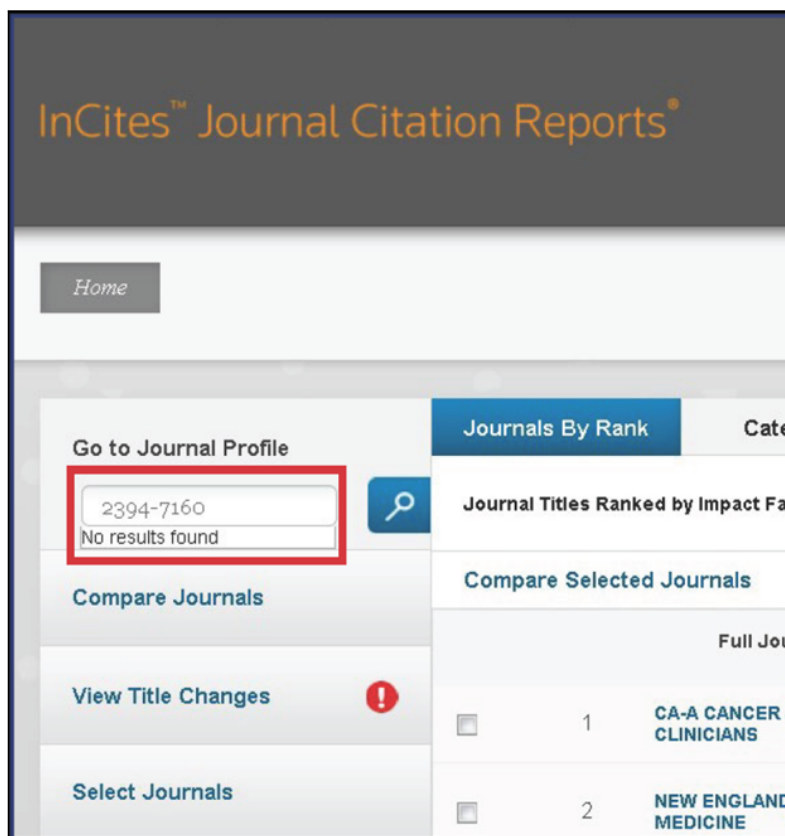
Because the text with the name of the metrics is not a link to a website with more information, we need to make sure whether the journal is listed in JCR and whether these metrics are genuine. From the figure below, it is obvious that the journal is not indexed in JCR and therefore did not meet the criterion, because it is either lying about being indexed in JCR or provides false information about the metrics.

The screenshot shows the InCites Journal Citation Reports search interface. The top navigation bar includes links for Web of Science, InCites, Journal Citation Reports, Essential Science Indicators, EndNote, and iPublonsHelp, along with a language dropdown set to English. The main header reads "InCites Journal Citation Reports" and "Clarivate Analytics". Below the header, a large heading says "Welcome to Journal Citation Reports" with a sub-heading "Search a journal title or select an option to get started". A search box is present with the placeholder text "Enter a journal name" and the value "1537-1514" entered. An orange arrow points to the search box. Below the search box, it says "No results found". At the bottom, there are three icons representing different features: a stack of books, a list, and a clipboard.

Another example of a journal falsely claiming to have citation metrics is the *Indian Journal of Advanced Nursing*, which declares that it has an impact factor of 2.002 (this is a moving bar where also IBI Factor is provided – see below the section about untrustworthy metrics).



When trying to verify the value of these metrics in JCR, we learnt that this journal is not indexed in this database.



A different situation is shown in the example of the journal *Vitamins & Minerals* with the metric Journal Impact Factor. This may either be an attempt to imitate the name of the real impact factor from JCR with the aim to confuse authors or providing a misleading metric.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the journal *Vitamins & Minerals*. The journal's ISSN is 2376-1318. The website features a navigation menu with options like Home, Editorial Panel, Instructions for Authors, Submit Manuscript, Articles in press, Current Issue, Archive, Special Issues, Metrics, and Contact. A search bar is located in the top right corner. The main content area includes several promotional banners and sections:

- Recommended Conferences:** Lists three upcoming conferences:
  - February 17-18, 2020: 9th International Conference on Probiotics, Functional Foods & Nutraceuticals (Osaka, Japan)
  - April 08-09, 2020: 9th World Congress on Public Health, Epidemiology & Nutrition (Sydney, Australia)
  - June 09-10, 2020: Probiotics, PreBiotics & Synbiotics (Singapore, Singapore)
- Editorial Board:** Lists four members:
  - Editor-in-Chief:** Manfred Eggersdorfer, Professor, Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Groningen, Switzerland.
  - Rene Rizzoli:** Professor, University Hospital of Geneva, Head of the service of bone diseases, Geneva.
  - Mary Harris:** Professor, Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition, Colorado State University, USA.
  - Alan M Diamond:** Professor, Department of Pathology, University of Illinois, USA.
- Submit Manuscript:** A section with a red arrow pointing to the text: "Journal Impact Factor 1.18". Below this, it says: "Submit manuscript at <https://www.scholarscentral.org/submissions/vitamins-minerals.html> or send as an e-mail attachment to the Editorial Office at [vitamins@jpeerreview.com](mailto:vitamins@jpeerreview.com)".
- Table of Contents:** Shows "2019 | Volume 8 Issue 4" with links for RSS and Archive.
- Open Access:** A banner stating "Open Access Journals gaining more Readers and Citations" with "700 Journals" and "15,000,000 Readers Each Journal" getting "25,000+ Readers". It also notes "This Readership is 10 times more when compared to other Subscription Journals (Source: Google Analytics)".

Contrary to the preceding example, here the name of the metric is a link to a website (see below) with a description of its calculation method. Although the calculation itself does not differ from the real impact factor, the basis for calculating this metric are citations from Google Scholar Citation Index database according to the information provided (see below). The journal violated the criterion *Accurate information about citation metrics in Journal Citation Reports and Scopus* by the fact that it used the official name of the real impact factor for its own metric, namely Journal Impact Factor. At the same time, the journal also did not comply with the criterion *Providing misleading citation metrics* because basing a metric on a system that uses even citations from presentations is questionable.

#### 5 Year Journal Impact Factor

The 5 year journal impact factor is the average number of times, the articles published in a journal get cited in last 5 years. It is calculated by dividing the number of citations received with the total number of articles published in previous five years. The 5 year journal impact factor is available only for the journals that completed 5 or more volumes.

#### Aggregate Journal Impact Factor

The aggregate journal impact factor for a subject category is calculated using the same method as the journal impact factor for a journal, but it also includes the number of citations for all journals in the category and the number of articles from all journals in the category. An aggregate journal impact factor of 1.0 implies that the articles in the subject category published in recent two years have been cited once on an average. The median impact factor is the median value of all journals impact factors in the subject category. The journal impact factor attenuates the significance of absolute citation frequencies. It alleviates the advantage of large journals over small journals because large journals circulate a larger body of citable literature. It also mitigates the benefit of frequently issued journals over less frequently issued ones and of older journals over newer ones. For the reason that the journal impact factor offsets the advantages of size and age and it is a helpful contrivance for journal evaluation.

\*2017 Journal Impact Factor was established by dividing the number of articles published in 2015 and 2016 with the number of times they are cited in 2017 based on Google Scholar Citation Index database. If 'X' is the total number of articles published in 2015 and 2016, and 'Y' is the number of times these articles were cited in indexed journals during 2017 then, journal impact factor =  $Y/X$

### 2.1.9 Accurate information about indexing in Web of Science and Scopus

Authors are motivated to publish in journals indexed in the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus because their evaluation is based on that. However, one should always check whether a claim about being indexed in one of these databases is true (medical professionals may also consider MEDLINE PubMed).

A journal's claim about being indexed in WoS or Scopus can be verified either in the database directly or according to the content of both databases available publicly. In the case of WoS, you can use the online search engine Master Journal List. The list of Scopus indexed journals can be downloaded on the website Elsevier in the section Solutions > Scopus > How Scopus works > Content coverage > Titles on Scopus, na kterých by je uživatel očekával, ale pouze na stránce s informacemi pro předplatné.

The necessity to carefully check information on journals' websites is shown on the example of *American Journal of Analytical Chemistry*, which gives Web of Science (Clarivate Analytics) at the first place in the section Indexation. This is complemented with data about citation rates and a link to a preview from WoS documenting this indexing.

The screenshot shows the website for the American Journal of Analytical Chemistry (AJAC). The page features a navigation menu with options like Home, Articles, Journals, Books, News, About, and Submit. A breadcrumb trail indicates the path: Home > Journals > Chemistry & Materials Science > AJAC. The main content area is titled 'American Journal of Analytical Chemistry' and includes a 'Paper Submission' button and social media icons. A red arrow points to the 'Indexing' section, which lists 'Web of Science (Clarivate Analytics)' as the first indexing service. Below this, it states: 'There are 3308 citations for articles published in the journal AJAC as of June 2019, which increase by 36% compared to 2429 citations as of June 2018. Please click the following link to see the screenshot.' To the right, a table titled 'AJAC Journal Stats >>' provides the following data:

Publication years	2010-2019
Publication count	874
Citation count	7541
h5-index	19
Downloads	3 242 748
Views	4 838 763
Downloads/article	3710,2
Citations/article	8.6

This text may give you the impression that the journal is indexed in Web of Science, although this is not the case (see below the preview from WoS). In reality, this preview from WoS only proves that the *Journal of Analytical Chemistry* was cited by other journals in WoS.

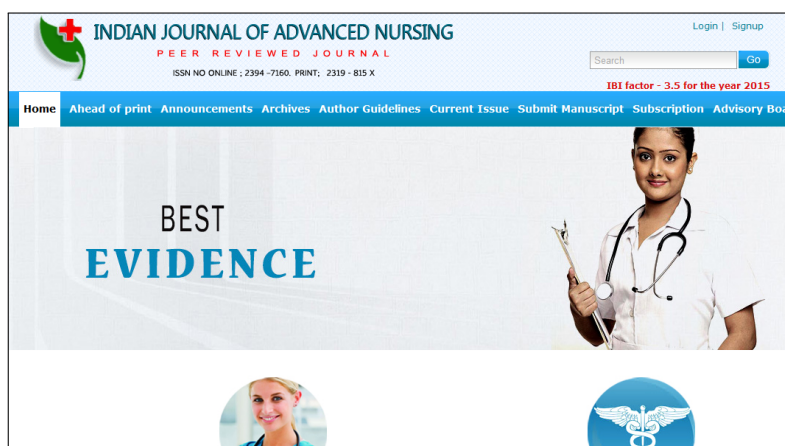
The screenshot shows the Web of Science search interface. The search bar contains the text 'American Journal of Analytical Chemistry'. Below the search bar, a message states: 'Your search found no records.' A red arrow points to this message. Below the message, there is a search bar with the text 'American Journal of Analytical Chemistry' and a search button. The search results are empty, and the message 'Your search found no records.' is displayed. Below the search bar, there is a dropdown menu for 'Publication Name' and a search button. The search results are empty, and the message 'Your search found no records.' is displayed.

### 2.1.10 Providing misleading citation metrics

Untrustworthy journals try to gain the appearance of being prestigious by providing various citation metrics which have nothing in common with impact factor, CiteScore, SNIP and SJR from JCR and Scopus. Most frequent are metrics combining an adjective with the term impact factor (e.g. Global Impact Factor, General Impact Factor, IBI Factor etc.). The problem of these metrics is their lack of transparency. Their method of evaluation is either not published or is based – even partially – on a subjective evaluation of journals.

This means that if you encounter a different metric than impact factor, CiteScore, SNIP and SJR from JCR and Scopus, you should try to learn more about the metric. In the chapter about citation metrics in JCR and Scopus the journal *Vitamins & Minerals* with the metric Journal Impact Factor served as an example. We also explained the method by which it is calculated, which includes citation data from Google Scholar Citations. With regard to the fact that Google Scholar Citations does not distinguish whether an article is cited by properly published texts or by various other documents such as presentations, drafts, etc., the data about citation rates can be considered questionable and as a result the entire metric is irrelevant.

Another example of a misleading citation metrics is IBI factor provided by the *Indian Journal of Advanced Nursing* on its website which was mentioned in the part about citation metrics in JCR and Scopus.



After searching on the internet the method of calculating IBI factor can be found (see a sample below). However, we find this metric controversial.

A journal can have an IBI factor anywhere between 0 and 5. IBI factor is calculated as follows-

**A. QUALITY OF ARTICLES- 10 Points**  
 **$\frac{\text{Total number of Original Research Articles} + \text{Total number of review articles}}{\text{Total number of articles in the past one year}} \times 10$**

**B. STABILITY OF THE JOURNAL- 10 Points**  
 1.Date on which 1st issue of the journal was published-  
 2.Total number of issues published in the past one year-  
 3.Has there ever been a delayed issue-  
 4.If yes duration/ average duration of delay of issue/ issues-

**C. TECHNICAL QUALITY- 10 Points**  
 1.Does the journal have an ISSN number-  
 2.Does the journal have a website-  
 3.Are full text articles available online-  
 4.Are abstracts available in English ( If the journal is published in a language other than English)  
 5.Formats in which articles are made available in the website-

Format	Yes/No
HTML	<input type="checkbox"/>
PDF	<input type="checkbox"/>
XML	<input type="checkbox"/>

6.Tools made available to authors on the website for managing bibliographic information-

Tools	Yes/No
Ref Works	<input type="checkbox"/>
End Note	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bibe Text	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ref Man	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others	If others, please mention which one.

7.Does the journal assign DOI numbers to articles-  
 8.Does the journal website provide download statistics-  
 9.Does the journal have both print and online versions-

**D. INTERNATIONALIZATION- 10 points**  
 1.Percentage of international editors in the editorial board-  
 2.Percentage of international reviewers-  
 3.Percentage of international authors-

The method of calculating IBI factor is as follows: first the journal is awarded points for criteria divided into sections A to E. Then the resulting IBI Factor is calculated according to the equation:

$$\frac{A + B + C + D + E}{10}$$

IBI Factor can be considered a misleading metric for several reasons:

- One question is whether it is possible to evaluate almost 5,000 journals on a yearly basis in the way described above, especially due to personal issues.
- The metric is not transparent. For example, already in the first section A, it is not clear why the sum of journals should be multiplied by 10 and why the number of this year's articles should be divided by the number of articles published the last year. In the other sections, it is not clear whether a journal receives 10 points only if it complies with all criteria, or if the points in the given section are divided by the number of criteria and journals then receive the respective number of points for the given criterion (e.g. if a journal complies with only one criterion out of four in the section B, does it receive 0 points or 2.5 points?).
- The criteria are controversial. For example, because there is no law or norm ordering that a journal should be a weekly, monthly, or yearly periodical, the criterion in section B evaluating the number of issues published last year is irrelevant. Similarly, journals are not obliged to have a website, therefore the criteria 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8 are also irrelevant.

In this way other criteria in the following sections could also be proven wrong or useless. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this material, the notes provided above suffice to demonstrate that it is vital to check metrics other than those from JCR and Scopus thoroughly.

## 2.1.11 Assessment Table

#	Criterion name	Method of criterion verification	Parameters for criterion	Score	Points
1	Unambiguous determination of article processing charges	Does the journal website give the exact amount of article processing charges?	The journal states that it does not collect any article processing charges.	1	
			Yes, the journal gives a specific final amount of the charges.	1	
			The amount of charges is unclear (for example, the journal states the price per article, adding that any additional pages will be subject to extra charge without specifying the charge).	0	
			The journal does not state the amount of article processing charges.	0	
2	Affiliations of editorial board members	Does the journal website include complete affiliations for all editorial board members, i.e. the name of the institution and the city/country?	The affiliation is complete and includes the institution and the city/country.	1	
			The affiliation is incomplete, with either the name of the institution or the city/country missing.	0	
			No affiliation is given.	0	
3	Description of the review process	Does the journal website include a detailed description of the review process – whether it is a double-blind peer review or open peer review and how many reviewers assess the articles?	Yes, a description of the review process is included.	1	
			The website only says “peer-reviewed” without giving further information about the process.	0	
			No, a description of the review process is not included.	0	
4	Free and open access to full text	Does the journal website allow users to freely download or view full-text articles from the current volume?	Yes, articles can be freely downloaded or viewed.	1	
			No, some or all of the articles cannot be downloaded or viewed.	0	




#	Criterion name	Method of criterion verification	Parameters for criterion	Score	Points
5	Name of the editor-in-chief is included	Does the journal website give the name of the editor-in-chief?	Yes, it does.	1	
			No, it does not.	0	
6	Unambiguous identification of the publisher	Does the journal website clearly identify the publisher (usually in the website footer in the copyright information), rather than just giving the title of the journal?	Yes, it does.	1	
			No, it does not.	0	
7	Journal states its ISSN on its website and the ISSN is valid	Does the journal or publisher website include the journal's ISSN (International Standard Serial Number) and is the ISSN verifiable via <a href="https://portal.issn.org/">https://portal.issn.org/</a> ?	Yes, it is stated on the journal's website and it is verifiable via ISSN Portal.	1	
			Yes, it is stated on the journal's website, but it is not verifiable via ISSN Portal	0	
			No, it does not.	0	
8	Accurate information about the journal's citation metrics in Journal Citation Reports and Scopus	If the journal website gives information about any of the citation metrics in JCR or in Scopus, this information is verified in the databases to see whether the journal gives the most up-to-date information.	The journal does not give any citation metrics.	1	
			The metrics given by the journal are the most up-to-date ones in JCR/Scopus.	1	
			The journal gives metrics from both databases, but some of them are not the most up-to-date ones in one of the databases.	0	
			The journal gives metrics from both databases, but none of them is the most up-to-date in either of the databases.	0	
			The journal only gives metrics from one database, but none of them is the most up-to-date one.	0	

#	Criterion name	Method of criterion verification	Parameters for criterion	Score	Points
9	Accurate information about the journal's indexing in Web of Science and Scopus	If the journal website gives information about indexing in Web of Science or Scopus, this information is verified in the databases to see whether they include the current or previous volume of the journal.	The journal does not give any information about indexing.	1	
			The journal gives accurate information about indexing in both databases.	1	
			The journal gives information about indexing in one of the databases and the information is accurate.	1	
			The journal gives information about indexing in both databases, but the information is false in the case of one of the databases.	0	
			The journal gives information about indexing in one of the databases and the information is false.	0	
10	Referring to a questionable citation metric or database	Does the journal website include information about any questionable citation metrics or databases?	The journal website does not refer to any questionable metric or database.	1	
			The journal website refers to a questionable metric or database.	0	
<b>Number of points needed to meet all evaluation criteria</b>				10	
<b>Total number of points</b>					

## 2.2 Evaluating the professional quality of a journal

The second step during journal evaluation must be an analysis of the journal's content, one focused mainly on its professional quality rather than on bad grammar or spelling as commonly associated with untrustworthy journals. Many authors have published in untrustworthy journals because they did not assess its professional quality, despite the fact that they can use one of the following tools for examining the quality of text processing besides their professional knowledge.

For example, the Joanna Briggs Institute created critical appraisal tools for various types of studies with questions checking comprehensibility, attention to detail, objectivity, and verifiability of the research results. Each of these questions is also complemented with an explanation of what specifically the question is aiming at in the article.



THE JOANNA BRIGGS INSTITUTE

### JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist for Case Reports

Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_ Record Number \_\_\_\_\_

	Yes	No	Unclear	Not applicable
1. Were patient's demographic characteristics clearly described?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Was the patient's history clearly described and presented as a timeline?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Was the current clinical condition of the patient on presentation clearly described?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Were diagnostic tests or assessment methods and the results clearly described?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Was the intervention(s) or treatment procedure(s) clearly described?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Was the post-intervention clinical condition clearly described?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Were adverse events (harms) or unanticipated events identified and described?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Does the case report provide takeaway lessons?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Overall appraisal:    Include     Exclude     Seek further info

Comments (Including reason for exclusion)


\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Sample of critical appraisal checklist for case reports from the Joanna Briggs Institute

Similar aid is provided by checklists from the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme containing questions about the clarity of aims and results of the research, the suitability of the chosen research method and the gathering of results, as well as compliance with ethical principles of research. These checklists help authors to assess the quality of the content of randomly chosen articles not only based on their specialization but also with the help of a standardized method. In this way authors can get an idea about the quality of editorial work and the journal's requirements for the professional quality of the published articles.



Paper for appraisal and reference:

Section A: Are the results of the review valid?

1. Did the review address a clearly focused question?

Yes		<p>HINT: An issue can be ‘focused’ in terms of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the population studied</li> <li>• the intervention given</li> <li>• the outcome considered</li> </ul>
Can’t Tell		
No		

Comments:

2. Did the authors look for the right type of papers?

Yes		<p>HINT: ‘The best sort of studies’ would</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• address the review’s question</li> <li>• have an appropriate study design (usually RCTs for papers evaluating interventions)</li> </ul>
Can’t Tell		
No		

Comments:

Is it worth continuing?

3. Do you think all the important, relevant studies were included?

Yes		<p>HINT: Look for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• which bibliographic databases were used</li> <li>• follow up from reference lists</li> <li>• personal contact with experts</li> <li>• unpublished as well as published studies</li> <li>• non-English language studies</li> </ul>
Can’t Tell		
No		

Comments:

2

Sample from the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme case studies checklist

### 2.3 Learning about the journal’s operating procedures

The third step when evaluating a journal is to try learning about the way the journal operates. In the case of journals with open peer review, it is necessary to read some peer reviews and the communication between the reviewers and the editor, as this provides the most accurate information about the review process and the editor’s reasons for accepting an article.

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Open Peer Review Reports for:

**Regulating digital health technologies with transparency: the case for dynamic and multi-stakeholder evaluation**

[← Back to article](#)

Pre-publication versions of this article are available by contacting [info@biomedcentral.com](mailto:info@biomedcentral.com).

Original Submission		
4 Sep 2019	Submitted	Original manuscript
15 Sep 2019	Reviewed	<a href="#">Reviewer Report - Joseph Kvedar</a>
24 Sep 2019	Reviewed	<a href="#">Reviewer Report - Josip Car</a>
1 Oct 2019	Author responded	<a href="#">Author comments - Elena Rodriguez-Villa</a>
Resubmission - Version 2		
1 Oct 2019	Submitted	Manuscript version 2
2 Oct 2019	Reviewed	<a href="#">Reviewer Report - Josip Car</a>
6 Oct 2019	Reviewed	<a href="#">Reviewer Report - Joseph Kvedar</a>
10 Oct 2019	Author responded	<a href="#">Author comments - Elena Rodriguez-Villa</a>

The publishing house BioMed Central opted for an open peer review in many of its journals; reviews together with the authors' reaction to them are publicly available. In this way, a reader can gain a precise idea about the course and quality of the review process and also about the journal or publisher's interest to publish only works of quality.

Since such open peer review is rarely employed by journals, we depend on information from secondary sources in this step. These sources may include platforms such as ResearchGate, Academia.edu, Retractionwatch.com, and Retractiondatabase.org, where researchers share their experience with publishing. Naturally, the information obtained on these platforms needs to be assessed critically. For example, one cannot conclude that the journal as a whole or its publisher are untrustworthy after seeing one article with forged or otherwise manipulated results. Instead, one should check whether, for example, the editorial board of the journal properly retracted the article afterwards. Or in the case that one uses platforms such as ResearchGate, one must pay attention to whether the discussants support their claims with evidence.

Indexation of a journal in Journal Citation Reports (JCR) and Scopus may also indicate how reliable the journal is. This is because if a journal fails to meet JCR's and Scopus's evaluation criteria or exhibits non-standard citation practices, the journal is excluded from their interface accessible to users. Therefore, users should be interested in the reasons why the indexation of a journal was interrupted or terminated. JCR provides these reasons in a brief form in its title suppression list and Scopus in its discontinued titles list. If necessary, one can try to reconstruct their evaluation approach. When evaluating a journal indexed in JCR, one needs to focus on possible non-standard citation practices of the journal (a significant increase or fall in the number of citations, self-citations, and articles, majority of citations from a small group of journals) as well as on compliance with 28 criteria from JCR. In a journal indexed in Scopus, the following data are checked within the journal's field: the self-citation rate, the total citation rate, CiteScore citation metrics, number of articles, number of full-text clicks and abstract usage.

For example, in JCR’s title suppression list from 2019, the *International Journal of Civic Engineering* is listed with the note “Self”, which indicates that the value of its impact factor is influenced by a high number of self-citations.

### Title Suppressions

**Editorial Expression of Concern**

Investigation following on the editorial expression of concern for 2017 data has been completed. Please see the results [here](#).

**Journals Suppressed from 2018 JCR Data (2019 release)**

Metrics for the titles listed below are not published due to anomalous citation patterns found in the 2018 citation data. These patterns result in a significant distortion of the Journal Impact Factor and rank that does not accurately reflect the journal’s citation performance in the literature. The Journal Impact Factor provides an important and objective measure of a journal’s contribution to scholarly communication. In the interest of fairness and accuracy for all journals, the distortion of the Journal Impact Factor by an excessive concentration of citations gives rise to the need for suppression. JCR staff will monitor these journals going forward and the titles will be included in a future edition of JCR when the anomalous patterns are resolved. Coverage of these journals in Web of Science and other Clarivate Analytics products is not immediately affected by suppression from the JCR. However, the titles may be subject to review to determine if they continue to meet the quality and publication standards necessary for inclusion in Web of Science Core Collection flagship indexes (Science Citation Index Expanded and Social Science Citation Index). For more information, review [our suppression policy](#).

A list of title suppression for previous years can be downloaded [here](#).

JCR Title	Full Title	Type
ACTA GEOL SIN-ENGL	Acta Geologica Sinica-English Edition	Self
BONE RES	Bone Research	Expression of Concern
HISPANIA-J DEV INTER	Hispania-A Journal Devoted to the Teaching of Spanish and Portuguese	Self
INT J CIV ENG	International Journal of Civil Engineering	Self
INT J MOB COMMUN	International Journal of Mobile Communications	Self

If you look at the specific data about this journal in JCR, you will learn that while its impact factor value ranges from 0.372 to 0.695 (average 0.497), its impact factor value without self-citation varies between 0.150 and 0.382 (with an average of 0.254). With regard to the method of calculating the impact factor, this means that approximately half of the citations of articles published in the *International Journal of Civil Engineering* were self-citations. The administrators of JCR considered such a high number of self-citations too significant an influence on the impact factor and therefore excluded the journal from their list.

### International Journal of Civil Engineering

ISSN: 1735-0522  
 SPRINGER  
 233 SPRING ST, NEW YORK, NY 10013  
 IRAN

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**Titles**  
 ISO: Int. J. Civ. Eng.  
 JCR Abbrev. INT J CIV ENG

**Categories**  
 ENGINEERING, CIVIL - SCIE

**Languages**  
 ENGLISH

6 Issues/Year;

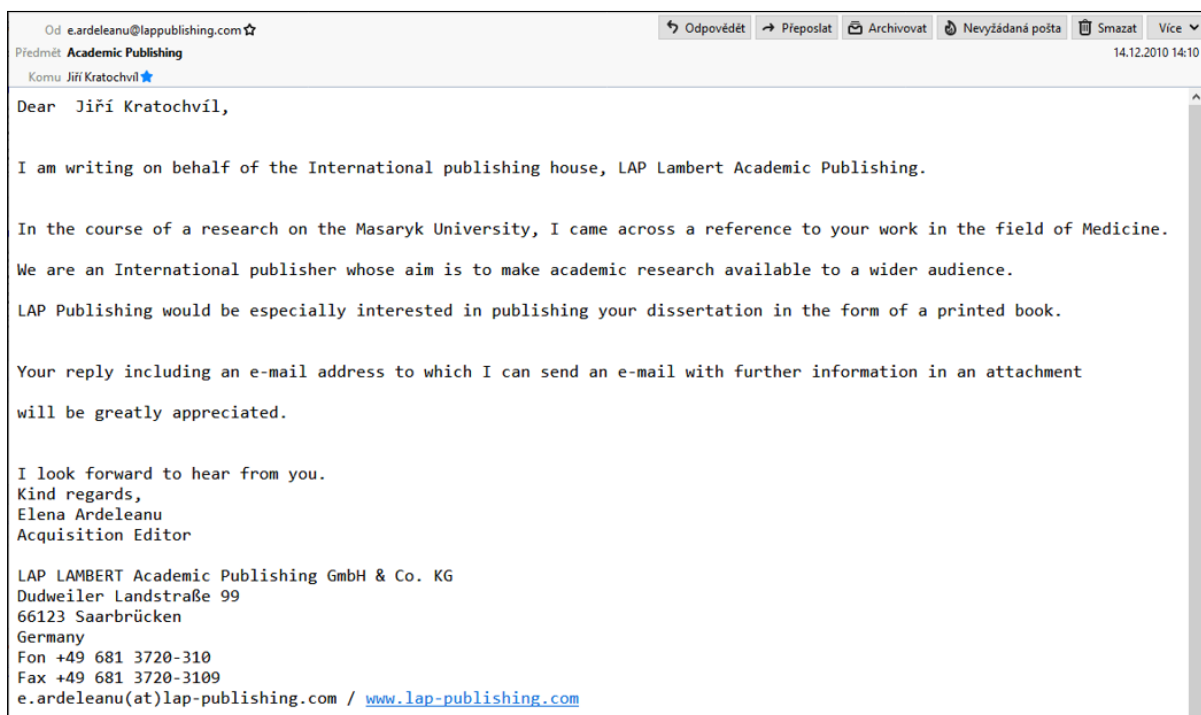
Key Indicators													
Year	Total Cites	Journal Impact Factor	Impact Factor Without Journal Self Cites	5 Year Impact Factor	Immediacy Index	Citable Items	Cited Half-Life	Citing Half-Life	Eigenfactor Score	Article Influence Score	% Articles in Citable Items	Normalized Eigenfactor	Average JIF Percentile
	<a href="#">Graph</a>	<a href="#">Graph</a>	<a href="#">Graph</a>	<a href="#">Graph</a>	<a href="#">Graph</a>	<a href="#">Graph</a>	<a href="#">Graph</a>	<a href="#">Graph</a>	<a href="#">Graph</a>	<a href="#">Graph</a>	<a href="#">Graph</a>	<a href="#">Graph</a>	<a href="#">Graph</a>
2016	318	0.624	0.340	0.718	0.120	50	5.1	>10.0	0.00050	0.136	100.00	0.05734	22.800
2015	211	0.372	0.264	0.582	0.076	66	5.2	>10.0	0.00048	0.145	98.48	0.05517	15.476
2014	151	0.468	0.240	0.711	0.060	50	4.2	>10.0	0.00053	0.192	100.00	0.05902	17.200
2013	94	0.397	0.382	0.487	0.286	7	Not ...	>10.0	0.00047	0.186	100.00	0.05203	19.758
2012	99	0.379	0.196	Not ...	0.091	33	Not ...	>10.0	0.00023	Not ...	100.00	Not ...	23.361
2011	90	0.695	0.203	Not ...	0.029	35	Not ...	>10.0	0.00013	Not ...	100.00	Not ...	50.424
2010	49	0.547	0.150	Not ...	0.194	31	Not ...	9.4	0.00011	Not ...	100.00	Not ...	41.304

On the other hand, Scopus has the criterion “Number of articles”. Here it checks whether a journal published half the number of articles or less than other journals from the same field. However, it does not provide reasons for why the bar was set to half and not a different percentage. Moreover, this criterion ignores the fact that due to the varying publication schedules of journals, the number of articles published may differ as well.

### 3 Author mills – dubious practices with monographs

Unfair publishing practices have affected even the field of monograph publication. A typical example is the so-called author mill or academic author mill. This term refers to publishers' practices where the business model consists of producing a large number of titles in very small editions – the very opposite of well-established publishing houses which focus on a limited number of good-quality authors and publish their works in thousands of copies. The target group of these publishers are usually postdoctoral researchers whom such publishers actively try to persuade to publish their doctoral theses with them.

Recognizing bogus publishers is more difficult compared to identification of untrustworthy journals, because publishers of books do not commonly provide detailed information on their websites regarding the description of the review process, editorial board, etc. Therefore, one should pay attention to various details and, above all, consult one's colleagues for what experiences they might have had with the publisher (e.g. whether there was a review process, what care was devoted to final language editing, etc.).



The publisher Lambert Academic Publishing (LAP) sent to Jiří Kratochvíl, one of the authors of this material, an offer to publish his PhD thesis as a book. The suspicion that LAP is a bogus publisher arises based on two factors. Firstly, the e-mail was sent in December 2010, yet Jiří Kratochvíl did not finish his PhD thesis and defend it until May 2013. Secondly, LAP state in the e-mail that they received a reference to Jiří Kratochvíl in the field of medicine, when in fact Jiří Kratochvíl was studying humanities




**WE DO NOT HAVE ANY HIDDEN AGENDAS**

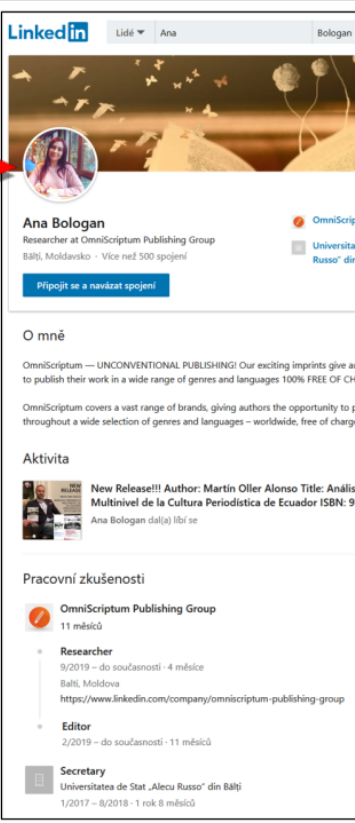
We are often criticized for not offering full fledged peer-reviews. The real fact is that peer-reviews are often abused as mechanisms of censorship. Therefore, peer-reviews do not always result in higher quality content. If your work has been assessed by your university thesis or dissertation committee, it has the qualities needed to have it published. We believe in freedom of information and that every author has the chance to bring his research out to the market without any censorship.

If you look at the website of LAP, under the link “Why choose us?” you can find – among other things – the information about the review process shown above. Of course every author can decide for themselves whether publishing a book, especially a scholarly one, without any review represents a real contribution to science. In any case, LAP’s justification for publishing PhD theses (or other graduate theses) without any peer-review process on the basis that the thesis underwent a similar process at the PhD student’s university, is controversial. This approach completely ignores the fact that even when the defence is successful, theses are of varying quality.

**OUR EDITORS**  
Balti, Moldova



V sekci Our team pak lze nalézt seznam editorů, kteří ale ne vždy mají dostatek zkušeností s vědeckým publikováním. Mezi ně patří např. Ana Bologan, která podle svého životopisu na LinkedIn po magisterském studiu cizích jazyků pracovala jako sekretářka na univerzitě a následně již jako editorka u LAP.





## 4 Conclusion

As it follows from this material, today it is an absolute must to carefully evaluate the quality of publications by the respective publisher. The ability to identify untrustworthy journals is becoming a natural part of the publication process. Before authors submit their article, they should always consider whether the publisher and its work display characteristics of untrustworthy publishing. When selecting a journal, authors must pay attention to whether all crucial information is provided and in a transparent way (e.g. contact details, clearly set financial policy of the publisher, verifiability of the professional qualification of editorial-board members, clearly set course of peer-review process, provision of only relevant citation metrics, etc.). Moreover, one cannot rely only on checking the formal criteria of a journal, rather one must also focus on its professional quality as well as the way the journal operates.

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