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## Predatory Publishing in Palliative Care



We read with interest the letter *Predatory Open-Access Publishing in Palliative and Supportive Care*.<sup>1</sup> The authors report that, to the best of their knowledge, this is the first attempt to analyze predatory publishing in palliative and supportive care. They did not find our paper *Open Access Journals and Predatory Publishing in Palliative Care*,<sup>2</sup> published in the journal *Medicina Palliativa*. It was accepted for publication in March 2017, was available online in January 2018, and was finally printed in July 2018. We addressed predatory publishing in palliative care from a different perspective to distinguish between legitimate open-access journals and predatory publishing in palliative care. We analyzed 32 palliative care journals with full or partial open access. Nine of these 32 journals came from publishers, such as *BMJ Journals*, *LWW*, *Liebert*, *Elsevier*, *Taylor & Francis* and *Cambridge Core*, that allow the possibility of publication with open access; five of the nine had recognized Impact Factors in Journal Citation Reports. Seven of the 32 journals had the profile of open-access scholarly journals, that is, journals that only accept open-access publications and are usually indexed in recognized directories such as the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) or the directory of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA) and do not share other relevant characteristics of predatory publishing.

In total, 16 of the 32 palliative care journals could be designated as “suspected” predatory journals. This designation is appropriate because there are no strict criteria to define a journal as predatory.<sup>2,3</sup> Although the Beall list is sometimes used as a reference, it has been criticized<sup>4</sup> for its potential to stigmatize publications. All 16 journals designated as “suspected” in our publication were included in the December 2016 version of the Beall list, and none appeared in the DOAJ or directory of OASPA. There were many concerns noted in this group of 16 journals, including a lack of indexing in PubMed, the use of e-mails asking for new papers, request for papers when the journal is not yet active, the offering of membership (payment not for every paper but for the option of publishing during a period), and the possibility of becoming a member of the Editorial Board or a reviewer.

At the last meeting of the Spanish Society of Palliative Care,<sup>5</sup> there were abstracts about the easy access to the Editorial Board of suspected predatory journals and the proportion of predatory journals that stop publishing after a few years. There also was discussion about the presence in palliative care of predatory conferences<sup>6</sup>—meetings that follow the model of predatory publishing, appearing as legitimate scientific

conferences that require payment to be included as a speaker on a free topic without proper editorial control over presentations. Predatory publishing in palliative care is a real concern and should be further studied.

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### Authors' Response



We would like to thank Dr. Sanz and Dr. del Valle for their comment on our letter *Predatory Open-Access Publishing in Palliative and Supporting Care* published in the *Journal*.<sup>1</sup> They give us the opportunity to apologize for not being able to consider their valuable and informative work on this topic published in *Medicina Paliativa*, which seems to be not indexed in PubMed.<sup>2</sup> In their work, they classified 16 of the 32 retrieved palliative care journals as “suspected” predatory journals. Although we agree about the fact that Beall list has been heavily criticized for subjectivity, it may be argued that the classification as “predatory journals” should be always considered as potential and should be always double-checked with recognized criteria of legitimacy.<sup>3</sup> In the

discussion section of our letter we specified that “... The presence of a journal or publisher in this list should not be consider as a certain proof of predatory activity ....” Moreover, the original and updated version of Beall list was described as “a list of potential predatory publishers and journals.”<sup>1</sup> Hence, the adjective “suspected” seems to be an only an addendum, not changing the real meaning of the selection using the original criteria of the list.<sup>4</sup> Clinicians and researchers should always use all available information and tools to evaluate by their own the legitimacy of a journal or publisher.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, it is a pleasure to know that the topic of predatory publishing has been discussed even in national palliative care congresses and we all hope that the interest will grow to limit the spread of this phenomenon.

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