

Paper written as science hoax published by 157 science journals

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LOS ANGELES, Oct. 3 (UPI) -- An error-ridden science paper submitted in an effort to expose unethical academic publishers was accepted by 157 open-access science journals, its author says.

The sting operation by the journal Science uncovered problematic and unethical behavior by publishers of "fee for publication" journals, some of which resort to false addresses, use overseas bank accounts and routinely provide only superficial "peer reviews," the Los Angeles Times reported Thursday.

"From humble and idealistic beginnings a decade ago, open-access scientific journals have mushroomed into a global industry, driven by author publication fees rather than traditional subscriptions," Science contributing correspondent John Bohannon, who wrote the hoax paper, wrote in a report on the operation.

Bohannon put together a spurious and fatally flawed study on a purported cure for cancer -- including purposeful blunders that should have been detected during a proper review -- to 304 open-access journals.

A worrying total of 157 journals accepted it, Bohannon said, while only 98 rejected it. The remaining 49 did not respond, he said.

Many of the journals accepting the paper demanded fees of thousands of dollars for publication.

Some of the open-access journals Bohannon submitted his paper to did prove to be professional in their practices, Bohannon acknowledged.

"Some open-access journals that have been criticized for poor quality control provided the most rigorous peer review of all," Bohannon wrote.

The flagship journal of the Public Library of Science, PLoS ONE, was the only journal that called attention to the paper's potential ethical problems, he noted.

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