

Reports of meetings

18th International Nursing Research Conference

11–14 November 2014, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain

On behalf of EASE, I was invited to participate in a plenary session entitled “*Controversies in scientific publications: open access vs paid access and how to publish in journals with high impact factor vs those specific in your research area*”, and shared the floor with two other speakers: Óscar Millet, a researcher from *CIC bioGUNE* and Brenda Roe, editor of the *Journal of Advanced Nursing*.

During the session the moderator raised the following questions about open access and scientific journals:

- Where to publish? Open access (OA) journals or journals with access by payment? Journals with high impact factors or journals that specialize in nursing?
- Quality of OA journals and the review process: are fewer articles rejected to get more economic benefits?
- Who should pay for the OA? Authors, institutions,...?
- Repositories (institutional or disciplinary) or open access journals or free access?
- Do general journals have higher impact factors than specialised journals?
- Impact factor or social impact?

Throughout the session some other issues relating to journals were also addressed, such as the peer review process, impact factor, and misconduct in science. The congress was attended by more than 500 people and the session aroused the interest of the audience, especially during the debate after the speakers’ presentations (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLNQ8h1RYvU&feature=youtu.be>).

It was pointed out that researchers are under pressure not only to publish (publish or perish) but to publish in journals with the highest impact factors. But what is more important, to address your key audience in a specialized journal or to publish in a general journal with higher prestige? From an open access perspective, there exist some new journals launched at the beginning of this century, like those published by the *Public Library of Science* (PLOS) or *BiomedCentral* or those that allow authors to pay for publishing, in which open access papers coexist with restricted access papers (hybrid journals). The cost of publishing in those journals is high, however, and some authors may lack the funds to pay the APCs (author publishing charges). But there also exist open access journals that are free of such charges. For example, according to the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ, which contains more than 10,000 journals) nearly two thirds of their registered journals are free for both readers and authors. The number of OA articles has increased considerably in recent years, especially in biomedicine, and open access is perceived as a natural way to share science and to offer universal access to the results of research.

The existence of “predatory publishers” was also mentioned. Such publishers can corrupt open access with dishonest behaviour and lack of transparency. Some predatory publishers spam researchers, soliciting manuscripts but failing to mention the required author fee, and then – when the paper is accepted and published – the authors are invoiced for the fees (for more information, visit Bell’s list at <http://scholarlyoa.com/publishers/>). Another attempt to discredit open access journals was an article widely discussed in different forums, published by *Science* last year entitled “Who’s Afraid of Peer Review?” by John Bohannon in the News section, but with the structure of a research article (see <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/342/6154/60.full>). The author invented a paper about a new drug against cancer and submitted it to different OA publishers without any control sample. He concluded that more than 50% of journals accepted the paper either with very poor or no quality control (peer review). Some of those journals are in the list of predatory publishers but there were also some published by Elsevier and Sage. My conclusion about this is that the quality of a journal does not depend on the type of access but on the quality of peer review and of editorial procedures (see also P. Suber’s comments at <https://plus.google.com/+PeterSuber/posts/CRHeCatQqGq>).

During the session we also discussed how impact factors can be increased artificially and how this can affect the choice of where to publish.

In summary, in choosing where to publish, authors should consider audience needs and relevance within an international context and give preference to publications where access barriers do not exist. Knowledge is a common good, and this is especially relevant for health. Open access increases communication between different communities, facilitates the sharing of results, and opens doors to innovation.

Reme Melero

EASE Vice-president from 2006–2012

