**India's UGC-approved list teeming with dubious journals**

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doi:10.1038/nindia.2018.39 Published online 23 March 2018

Many science journals in the list approved by University Grants Commission (UGC), India's apex body responsible for maintaining standards of higher education, are actually "predatory or dubious", according to a new report1. The report says these dubious journals publish‘anything’ in the name of a research for a fee.

The UGC undertook an exercise to redo its list of credible Indian journals in 2017 after an [analysis](https://www.natureasia.com/en/nindia/article/10.1038/nindia.2017.115) showed that 27% of the world's predatory journal publishers were based in India and about 35% of authors in such journals were from Indian institutions.

The contentious list, published by UGC in June 2017, contains 32, 659 journals including 5699 journals recommended by different universities for addition to the catalog. [Criticisms](https://www.natureasia.com/en/nindia/article/10.1038/nindia.2017.114) that the list included many substandard journals prompted Bhushan Patwardhan at the Savitribai Phule University in Pune launch a new study using "a stringent protocol with objective criteria to identify potentially predatory, dubious and substandard journals."

In their study, the authors critically analysed 1009 journals (belonging to the 'university source’ category of the approved list) and found that only 112 journals passed their protocol. "Our results suggest that over 88% of the non-indexed journals in the university source component of the UGC-approved list could be of low quality," their report says. "Therefore, journals from the university source component, except those already indexed in Scopus or Web of Science, should be withdrawn from the current UGC-approved list."

Subhash Lakhotia, professor of zoology at the Benaras Hindu University and one of the authors of the study says this reflects a sad state of affairs. "In view of these results, the current UGC-approved list needs serious re-consideration," he says.

The authors have identified several dubious publishers and journals that are involved in a variety of unethical practices and possible "criminal acts". They noted that 34.5% of the journals analyzed had no address, website details or editor names mentioned while another 52.3% provided false claims about impact factor or editors with poor credentials. "Many of these journals appeared to recruit fake editors," the report says. "We think that the severity of this problem might be much more than perceived."

The authors say such unethical practices and the unscrupulous business of publishing have rapidly grown during the last decade. The primary reasons behind the sudden spurt of publication in predatory journals, the authors note, are the emphasis on the number of research publications for faculty appointments, and mandated publication of at least two papers prior to submission of doctoral thesis by PhD scholars.

The authors have urged academia and government agencies in India to work together to develop strategies to stop the mushrooming of illegitimate journals. They plan to subject more journals in the UGC list to their stringent tests to identify fakes. The UGC, they say, must also consider establishing a "Centre for Publication Ethics