



Good practice of scientific publication: a discontinued model?



A few months ago, an author withdrew a manuscript submitted to ENDO – Endodontic Practice Today after it had been accepted for publication. The Faculty of Medicine of his university did not include ENDO on the list of those journals accepted for habilitation or third-party funding, as it does not currently have an impact factor. This manuscript had been reviewed by two reviewers twice, and been revised by the editor, but in the view of the local university body, it did not meet the scientific minimum standard.

In addition to this extreme example, it is also common for authors to ask before submitting their manuscript in which indices ENDO – Endodontic Practice Today is listed. Not infrequently, before submission or even after submission, authors report that their university does not accept ENDO for internal evaluation procedures. Every year very interesting and high-quality manuscripts for our journal are lost in this way. This is particularly worrisome, since ENDO – Endodontic Practice Today has been indexed in the Web of Science – Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) for a year, and thus has a good chance in the foreseeable future to obtain an impact factor. However, these examples reflect only one side of the coin.

The dubious nature of this development, which in itself is incomprehensible, is compounded by the increasingly widespread and very aggressive fake journals in the scientific publishing media market. My co-editor, Professor Chong, has recently commented on these pseudo-scientific journals in a very readable editorial¹. In recent months, another unsightly development has taken place, namely that of fake conferences. Hardly a day goes by without me receiving an invitation as an “Honourable Keynote Speaker” to a meeting in a, mostly very attractive, place anywhere in the world. A closer look at

these mails soon reveals that these are purely commercial interests: for a mostly three- to four-digit dollar amount, I may lecture about a topic of my choice. Such invitations are sent randomly, in a scattergun approach: my expertise lies in the area of endodontics, but I am invited to fake congresses in veterinary medicine, chemistry, pharmacy, dermatology, railway technology ...

In the journal of German university teachers (“Forschen & Lehren”, Research & Education) a very interesting short article has been published on this topic². In Germany alone, more than 5000 scientists have published their research contributions in pseudo-scientific journals that ignore basic quality criteria. Many of these 5000 scientists have also visited fake congresses, with a rising trend over the last 3 years. For this purpose, public funds have obviously been used in a not inconsiderable manner. This means that government funding or university funds have been used to finance fake publications or travels to fake congresses. A total of 80 scientists have been requested by their universities to delete their publications or lectures published in fake journals and held at fake conferences from their publication lists.

These developments, then, are the other side of the coin. In my view, it is too easy to blame the increasing number of presentations in fake journals or at fake conferences only on the scientists. Of course, scientists want to publish their research results, thereby presenting themselves and their scientific institution. However, as long as the impact factor is the measure of all things on the part of the medical faculties, it is increasingly difficult for them to adhere to the basic rules of scientific publishing. Do university internal decisions to accept only a very small number of journals (mostly those with an impact factor) regarding the approval of third-party funding or scientific careers, push the scientists into

the arms of the pseudo-journals? Why are the journals such as ENDO – Endodontic Practice Today, i.e. those with a blinded review process and transparent and objective guidelines, not adequately recognized by the faculties? The fact that ENDO – Endodontic Practice Today is listed in the Web of Science – ESCI, in my opinion, clearly proves that elementary guidelines of scientific publication are well respected by this journal.

So it remains to be hoped that from both sides – the scientists and also the medical faculties of each university – there will be a return to basic rules of a fair, transparent and scientifically high-quality publication of research contributions. Only in this way can the degeneration of fake publications be effectively undermined. Good practice of scientific publication is certainly not a discontinued model!

In this sense, I wish all readers of and contributors to ENDO – Endodontic Practice Today a peaceful end to the year, and for 2019, all the best.



Edgar Schäfer
Editor-in-Chief

■ References

1. Chong BS. All that glisters is not gold. ENDO (Lond Engl) 2018;12:3-4.
2. Forschung & Lehre. Universitäten reagieren auf Pseudo-Zeitschriften. [Universities respond to pseudo-journals] 2018;25:939.