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PRACTICALITY VERSUS IDEALISM FOR CURBING PREDATORY PUBLISHING: A REPLY TO TEIXEIRA DA SILVA

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Predatory publishing is a threat to the scientific community as it often communicates information that is misleading, flawed and unscholarly. While the importance of discrediting such predatory journals and publishers has been identified, steps towards curbing such unethical practices are progressing at a slower pace. In this light, an editorial decision to completely ban citations of papers published in predatory journals in the *Journal of Threatened Taxa* (*JoTT*) was taken (see Raghavan et al. 2015) primarily based on Beall's (2015) List. A ban on citation of papers from predatory journals is a bold step towards curbing the growth of predatory publishers and is in tune with the findings presented by Teixeira da Silva (2014) who suggested that scholarly journals act as surrogates for inflating citations and validating unscholarly research published in predatory journals by citing the references. Because *JoTT* encourages scientific debates through the process of responses and replies, which are vital for the evolution of scientific debates, we were happy to receive a response from Teixeira da Silva (2015) on the editorial.

To provide objective criteria for identifying predatory journals *JoTT* suggested that authors refer to the list of publishers and stand-alone journals at www.scholarlyoa.com (Beall 2015). Teixeira da Silva (2015) cautions the use of Beall's (2015) List by pointing to its limitations and his criticism is only regarding the use of Beall's List for identifying predatory journals. We, however, would like to note that the fifth guideline in the *JoTT* editorial (Raghavan et al. 2015, p. 7611) clearly indicates that *JoTT* is aware of the limitations of Beall's List and is open to other systematic and authentic evaluations of journals. The first guideline in the *JoTT* editorial (Raghavan et al. 2015, p. 7610) makes it clear that Beall's List is used for practical purpose, because it is the only available extensive database that identifies a list of predatory publishers and journals based on a set of criteria that can be easily tested and validated. Even Teixeira da Silva (2015) himself states, "I do admit, very sadly, that there is still no better (i.e., quantitative) list than the Beall lists". It is not possible for the editors or reviewers of *JoTT* to evaluate all the references cited in the manuscript for their scientific content. Therefore, *JoTT* currently relies on the only available authentic list provided by Beall (2015) for setting standard and objective criteria. It is then the responsibility of the authors who conduct good research to publish their findings in scholarly journals and not resort to predatory journals and publishers listed in Beall (2015). Since Beall's (2015) lists are dynamic and publishers and journals can appeal providing justification against listings, along with authors, publishers can also improve themselves and fulfill criteria appropriate for a scholarly publication.

The entire premise for Teixeira da Silva's (2015) criticism, which is based on use of Beall's (2015) list

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provides no alternative for the same. Although, he briefly mentions the Predatory Score devised by him (Teixeira da Silva 2013), it is not clear why Teixeira da Silva (2014), while studying the citation of papers from predatory journals, does not use this score. It is also confusing that throughout the text Teixeira da Silva (2014) criticizes but resorts to use Beall's List rather than his own score developed earlier (Teixeira da Silva 2013). Teixeira da Silva (2014) also suggests "... publishers to step forward to analyze the reference lists of their journals..." using Beall's List for analysis and arguments.

We agree with Teixeira da Silva (2015) that a system, which provides quantitative index of predatory publishing policies, could serve as a good alternative. Developing such a system, evaluating all known journals through this system and making it available free for public access, however, is a mammoth task. Further, such a system needs to be evaluated and peer reviewed so as to make sure that the criteria used for evaluation are appropriate. The 'Predatory Score' developed by Teixeira da Silva (2013) is a good initial attempt; however there are several issues with this scoring system which is beyond the scope of a discussion in this reply. Nevertheless, the most important of the issues is practicality; Teixeira da Silva's criteria are idealistic and elaborate that gathering this information for all journals is difficult. It is also open

to possible misrepresentation by a predatory journal to score high on some of the criteria. Finally, since some criteria are influenced by individual manuscripts, how the predatory score provides a cumulative judgment for the entire journal is not clear. If a revised predatory score can be synthesized that is reviewed by peers from different disciplines to ensure that a more reliable quantitative score is available for deciphering predatory publishing policies, then as stated in the fifth guideline in the *JoTT* editorial (Raghavan et al. 2015, p. 7611), *JoTT* will be open to adapt this scoring system for curbing academic predators.

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