

## Canadian cardiac journal turns “predatory”

A reputable cardiology journal published in Canada for 17 years has been sold and turned into a “predatory” journal soliciting low-quality research from scientists desperate to publish.

*Experimental & Clinical Cardiology* was part of the Pulsus Group in Oakville, Ontario, until Pulsus sold it last year.

Its new owners — listing an address in Switzerland but banking in Turks and Caicos — print whatever authors submit, verbatim, for US\$1200.

The journal sends spam to many doctors, including those with no connection to cardiology, asking for papers.

Jeffrey Beall, the university librarian for the University of Colorado at Boulder, has added the journal to his widely followed list of “predatory” journals — websites that pretend to be academic journals in order to attract paying authors.

He calls this latest news a case of “a once-respected cardiology journal ... sold to persons unknown who are now doing a fake peer review and directing revenue earned from article processing charges to be wired to a bank in the Turks and Caicos Islands, a tax haven.”

Its former Canadian publisher doesn't know who is behind the journal today. “I don't have a clue,” said Robert Kalina. “We published the journal for 17 years and we were losing money on it. Suddenly [buyers] showed up and they offered us a decent price for it. I couldn't believe it.”

The deal went through, and a few months later the new owners re-sold it to another group that says it's in Switzerland.

Kalina found the new owners, who occasionally dealt with his office, used English names but wrote “awful” English.

The journal's website doesn't let readers look up anything by name, title or subject matter; there is no search function. Articles are displayed in a chronological list.



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***Experimental & Clinical Cardiology* is churning out a huge volume of profitable articles — 142 in the month of July alone, worth \$170 000.**

Many articles are called “Enter Paper Title.” Authors' names are sometimes missing. These errors are left uncorrected. As well, submissions are approved verbatim within days, with no questions from the reviewers the journal claims to use.

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It wouldn't respond to repeated requests for an interview.

“It's very difficult today for young scientists to get published, and so they'll grab anything,” Kalina said. “I'm quite upset about it.”

Dr. John Fletcher, editor-in-chief of *CMAJ*, said the predatory problem is serious in medicine. “Authors are looking to publish. This is the lifeblood of an academic career: publish or perish. These journals are being predators on

authors, taking their money and not actually giving them anything,” he said. “It's preying on the vulnerable.”

“It also matters for readers. Quite a lot of readers of research don't have time to get into the nuts and bolts of a research article and trust journals to do a proper job of vetting research.” He said publication in a journal “should offer some kind of reassurance to the reader to say, ‘Okay, it has passed muster with a group of people who are peers, therefore I will take it seriously.’”

“As far as I'm concerned this is academic fraud. It's related to the worst form of opportunism,” added Roger Pierson, a professor of medicine at the University of Saskatchewan. “This kind of crap dishonours the entire enterprise.” — Tom Spears, Ottawa, Ont.

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