

Hijacked journals are attacking the reliability and validity of medical research

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Maximizing the reliability and validity of the findings of clinical research and reducing publication bias are unquestionable challenges for peer-reviewed medical journals as they are devoted to being reliable sources for clinical judgments, medical practice, and health policymaking (1). In addition, where to publish medical research and how to avoid questionable journals are additional challenges for clinical researchers (2, 3). However, the world of medical science recently has been attacked by a new phenomenon, i.e., hijacked journals. The cybercriminals have been involved in creating counterfeit websites for scientific journals since early in 2012 (4-7). They extended their scam to the medical and clinical science journals recently by hijacking seven prestigious medical journals, including *Emergencias* (an emergency medicine journal from Spain), the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, *Vitae-Revista* (The Official Publication of the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Chemistry at the University of Antioquia, Colombia), *Amala* (published by the Amala Cancer Research Center in India), *TERAPEVTICHESKII ARKHIV* (from Russia), *Kardiologiya* (from Russia), and *Revue Scientifique et Technique* (published by the World Organization for Animal Health).

A main concern about this new phenomenon is that the unreviewed manuscripts that are published on counterfeit websites become a source for clinical practice and health policy making, since such articles definitely will appear in the search result of any attempt at a systematic review on the clinical literature. A second significant threat the hijacked journals impose on medical science is that their unreviewed findings will be a source for new medical hypotheses that can be used to attack the reliability and validity of future clinical research findings (7). Warning the world of medical science about this new scam and considering rigorous technical review of the citations to and from medical articles could be the most practical measures in the short term; however, we must determine long-term measures to protect the reliability and validity of published medical research (4).

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