

## Predatory publishing: send the alarms ringing

It is not uncommon these days to receive an e-mail to attend a 'world class conference', publish one's research in an 'international journal' or more so, be its editor/member of the editorial board. To be invited is to be considered honourable enough to be fit for the occasion and welcoming it with gratitude is the mark of one's humbleness. But in today's world where a man's motives are driven by his intense and selfish desires, it is imperative not to embrace all invites with open hands. Predatory journals are a coterie of vultures who prey on the researchers, via an invitation and the ignorant researchers, like a flock of sheep happily walk into their trap to be preyed upon. These bulletins are a false representation of good and reputed journals that prejudice on a person's desperate need to attain quick, easy and hustle-free recognition and what is peculiar is that while doing so, they not only exploit his research worth years of hard work and tons of money for their personal gain, but also make him pay hundreds of dollars for it.

Over the past few years, numerous predatory journals have mushroomed globally. These journals are known to publish sub-standard articles jeopardizing the scientific growth and knowledge<sup>1</sup>. The rise in the number of articles published in predatory journals in recent times is alarming. Shen and Björk<sup>2</sup> observed nearly eight-fold increase in predatory articles between 2010 and 2014. Thus, the problem of predatory publications has never mattered more than it does today, and needs urgent attention of the scientific community. The problem is graver in the developing world. The need of the hour is to create enough awareness in this regard and help young researchers make an educated decision towards publication/presentation of their valuable research. Widely read journals worldwide are the perfect media for dissemination of knowledge on this very relevant issue. Besides, individual institutions and leading associations need to alert researchers from falling into the trap of predatory journals through fre-

quent trainings and workshops on publication practices.

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2. Shen, C. and Björk, B. C., *BMC Med.*, 2015, **13**, 230.

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## Wheat blast reported in Asia: should we fear?

Literally speaking blast means explosion. Wheat blast directly strikes wheat ear and renders grains shrunken, shrivelled and deformed within a week of initial symptoms giving no time to farmers to react. Blast is known to infect many grasses such as rice, wheat, barley, etc. In fact, rice blast has been one of the most important and damaging rice diseases, whereas wheat blast is of relatively recent occurrence<sup>1</sup>. It all started in 1985 in Brazil and soon spread to other iso-climatic neighbouring countries of South America. The recent wheat blast uproar in media has its origin in detection of wheat blast in Bangladesh<sup>2</sup> during early 2016. A spread of wheat blast in South Asia could jeopardize food security of 300 million inhabitants of this region as they consume more than 100 million tonnes of wheat each year. It is already reported that blast affected 16,000 hectares of wheat crop in Bangladesh and consequent poor harvest led to Bangladesh importing extra 400,000 tonnes of wheat compared to previous year<sup>3</sup>.

The blast causing fungal pathogen *Magnaporthe oryzae* can spread through seed and can also survive on crop residues. Most current wheat varieties are blast susceptible, pathogen is highly variable, epidemiology and genetics of resistance is poorly understood. All this makes wheat blast a formidable wheat enemy. Wheat blast requires concurrent heat and humidity to develop, and experts had earlier warned about a possible movement of blast from Latin America to similar regions of Africa and Asia. This detection of blast in early 2016 in Bangladesh confirmed the fear. The large scale wheat export to Bangladesh from Brazil is suspected to be the carrier of wheat blast from Latin America to Bangladesh<sup>4</sup>. The other potential threat is capability of fungal pathogens to evolve fast to adapt to new climates. This is worth mentioning that first detection of blast in US in 2011 was reported to be a case of host jumping by blast pathogen<sup>5</sup>. Yellow rust which was historically endemic mainly in colder regions quickly

adapted to warmer climates and is now a major threat to wheat crop in regions where it was unheard of until a few decades ago. If blast fungus shows similar evolving capacity, it could soon spread to other hot and humid wheat-growing regions in South Asia and beyond. The situation perhaps is even more demanding as fungicides at best offer only a partial defence<sup>6</sup>.

1. Maciel, J. L. N., *Nut. Nat. Resources*, 2011, **6**, 1.
2. Callaway, E., *Nature*, 2016, **532**, 421.
3. <http://newagebd.net/238916/wheat-import-rises-due-low-yield/>
4. <https://github.com/croillab/wheat-blast>
5. Tosa, Y. et al., *PMPP Physiol. Mol. Plant Pathol.*, 2016, **95**, 84.
6. <http://www.cimmyt.org/wheat-blast/>

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