

Workshop:
Writing for a scholarly journal
10 June 2021



science & innovation

Department:
Science and Innovation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Tips on publishing

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Editor-in-Chief
South African Journal of
Science



Some feedback on articles submitted for publication

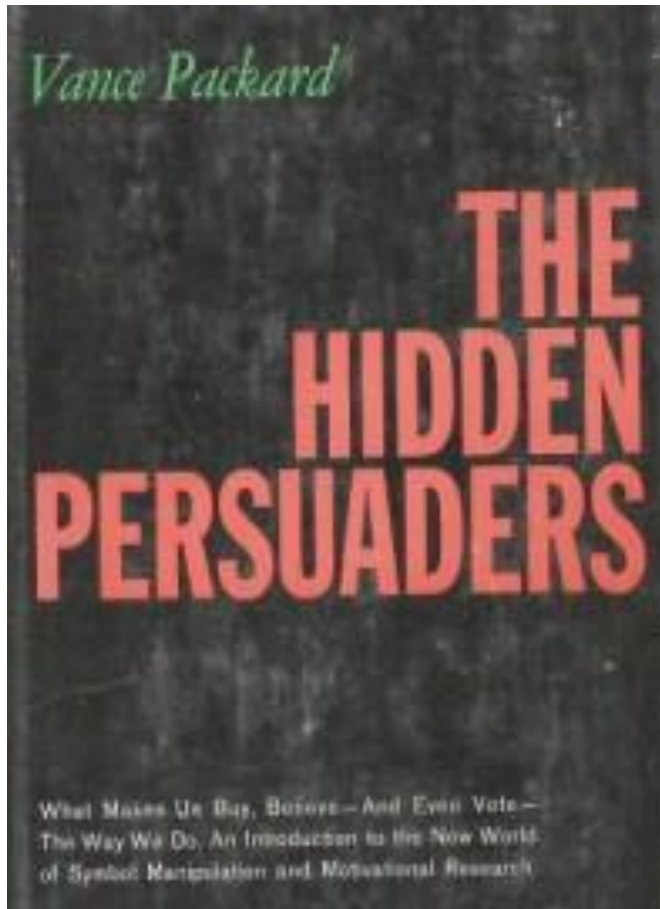
- In summary, this article adds nothing to knowledge
- I can't see why the author bothered
- The author is clearly not English speaking and needs some remedial help in English before he/she should think of publishing in academic journals



“Let me through! I’m a critic.”

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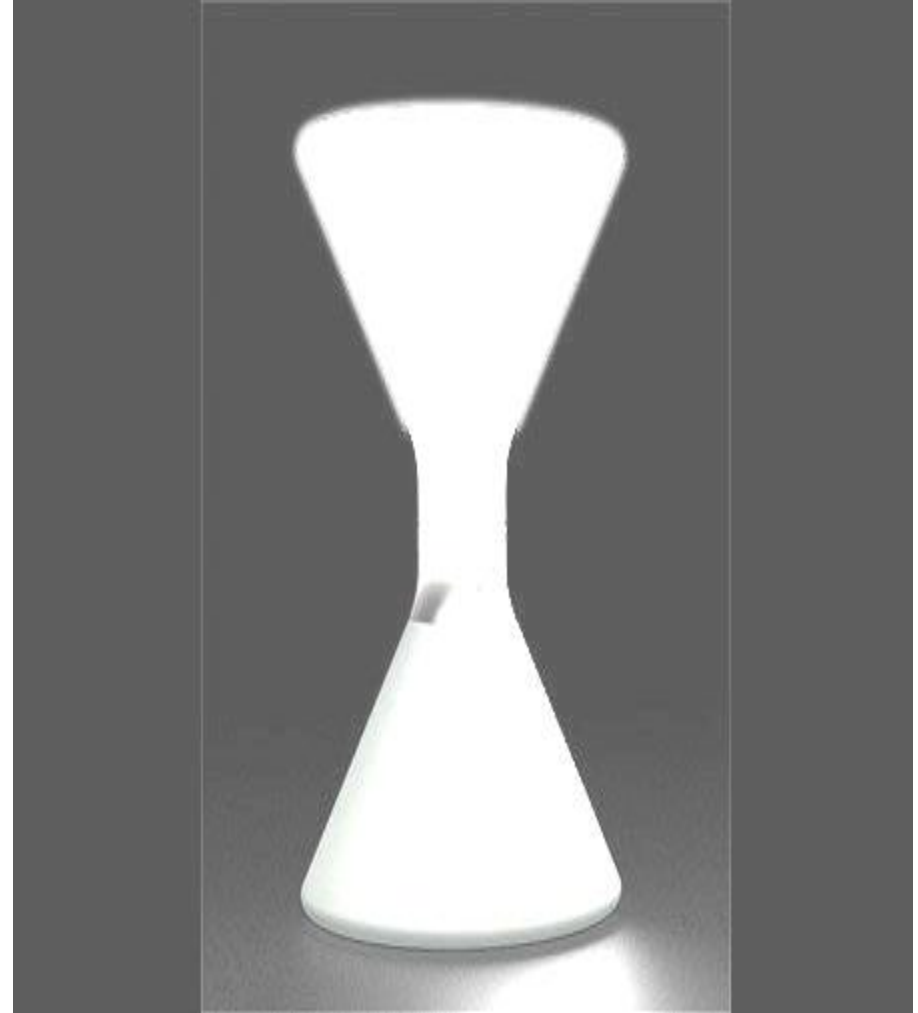
Some key strategic issues



- All they ever want is repetition. All they really like is what they know. (S. Sondheim)
- One idea, and preferably fewer (P. Collett)
- The set-up: “You always knew...but you didn’t know...” (V. Packard)

Taking your reader with you

- Of pols, gags and other unmentionables
- Sunday in the park with attention deficit disorder
- Double funnels



An example of a PhD on Ageing

Chapter1	The biology of ageing
Chapter 2	The psychology of ageing
Chapter 3	The sociology of ageing
Methods	
Results	
Conclusions	

Parts of an article

- WHY I did it
- HOW I did it
 - WHAT I did
- WHAT I found
- WHAT it means

- RATIONALE
- METHOD
 - PROCEDURE
- RESULTS
- DISCUSSION

Audience audience audience

- Know whom you're talking to
- Enter into a conversation
- If you want to take your reader with you, you have to know who they are



Modesty, good and bad



- Always go for the best journal and work your way down – don't be modest
- Nobody likes a smart-aleck
- You are not a journalist
- Be very clear about what you can and can't say from your data (as the mathematician said to the physicist)

The modest, the pompous, or the just plain terrified?

- Fifty percent of the four subjects were approached by the investigator and were requested for their participation under the auspices of the current study...
- It is believed...
- Notwithstanding the heretoforementioned, in pursuance of the ultimate goal of statistical significance having been obtained...

Some tips

- Short sentences
- Active voice where feasible
- Words of one syllable
- Not a single word or sentence more than you need
- First person (preferably, and if allowed by journal)
- Signposting, signposting, signposting
- Simplify, simplify, simplify
- You don't have to say everything you know (this is not your life's work)

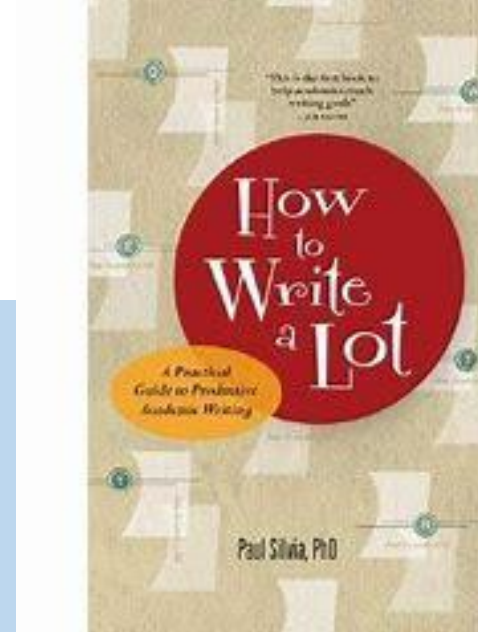
The blow catches him from the right, sharp and surprising and painful, like a bolt of electricity, lifting him up off the bicycle.

SCIENCE ARTICLES: A GUIDE

	AVERAGE SENTENCE IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND	AVERAGE SENTENCE IS HARD TO UNDERSTAND
SUBJECT MATTER IS COMPLEX	GREAT WRITING	TYPICAL WRITING
SUBJECT MATTER IS SIMPLE	HONEST WRITING	PROBABLY JUST BULLSHIT

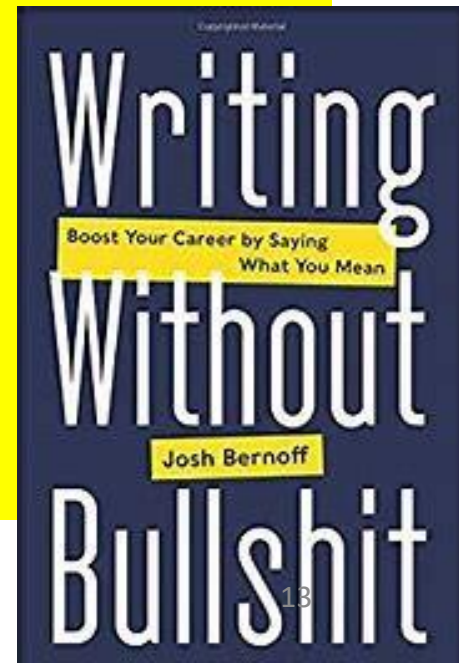
Just get started writing

- Write often - every day if you can
- “The secret is regularity” (Silvia)
- Use the ABC approach (Rabe)
- Writing and editing are not the same – try not to edit too soon
- Keep and save different versions and develop a method for saving different versions easily, for example
 - yyyyymmddtimetitle.docx
 - 201810200600traumachildhood.docx
 - 201811021530traumachildhood.docx

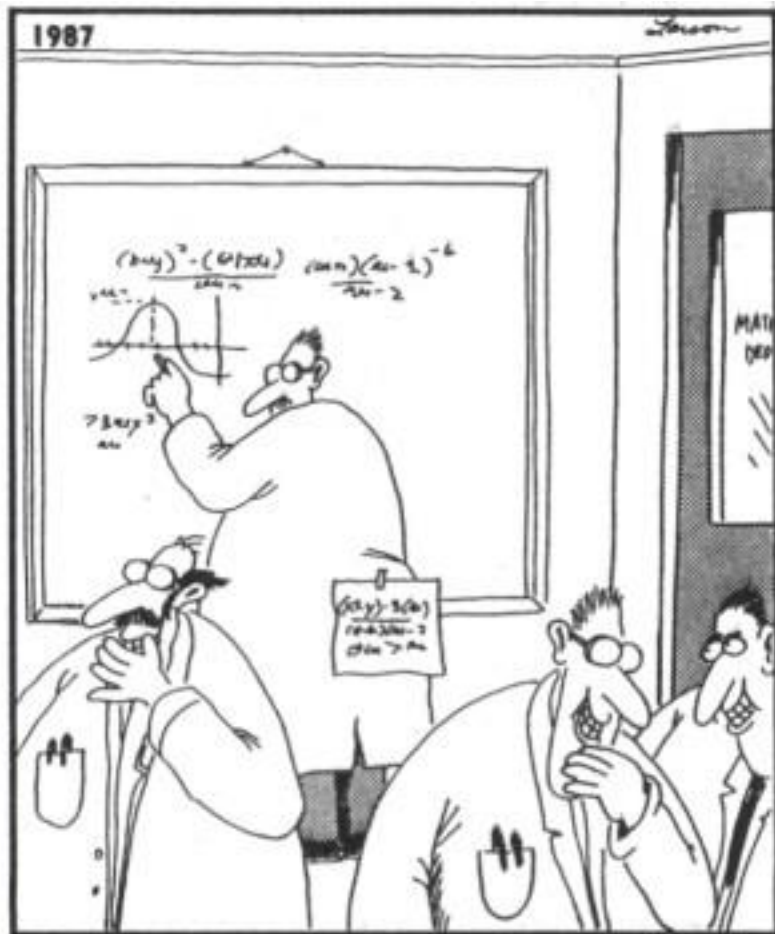


You don't have to start at the beginning

- Start writing where it is easiest to write – this is often not the beginning
- Generally the first few sentences take longer than the next ones.
- In the beginning, don't worry about writing in what you think is formal or academic language –
- The key thing is communicating and getting your ideas out there – telling a story which is easy for your reader to understand.

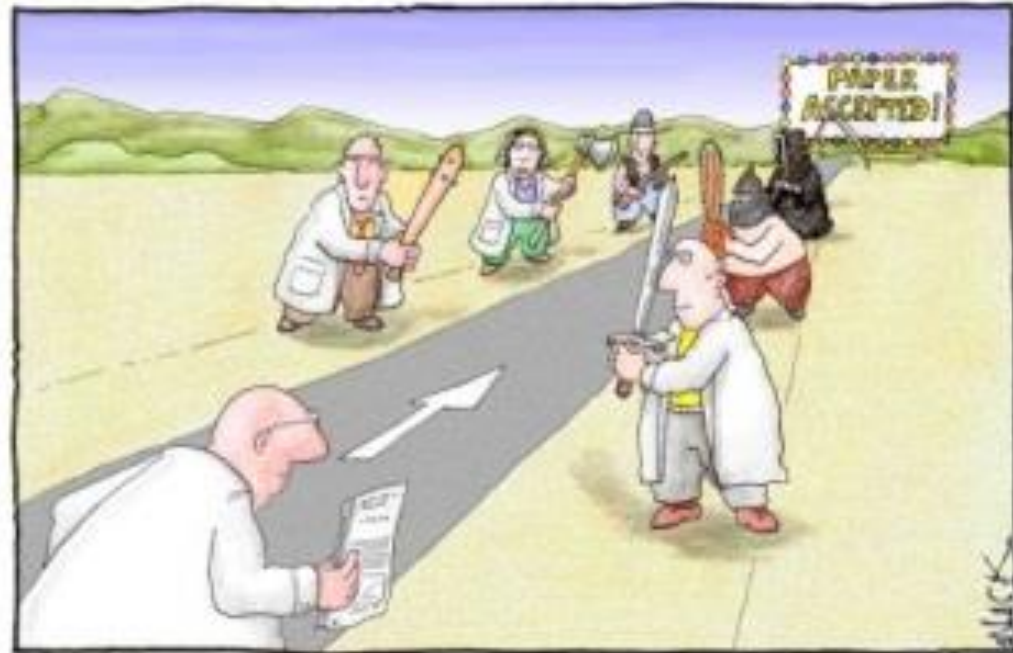


Dealing with peer review (or: Humiliation can be fun)



Peer review

Credit: Gary Larson - The Far side



Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as 'quite an improvement'.¹⁴

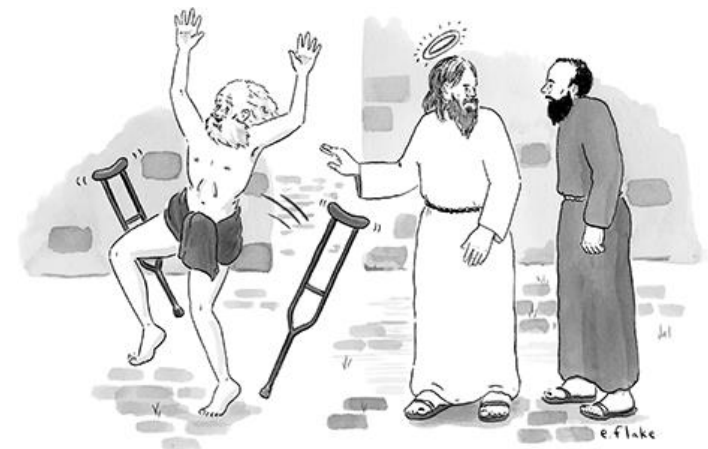
But....



WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

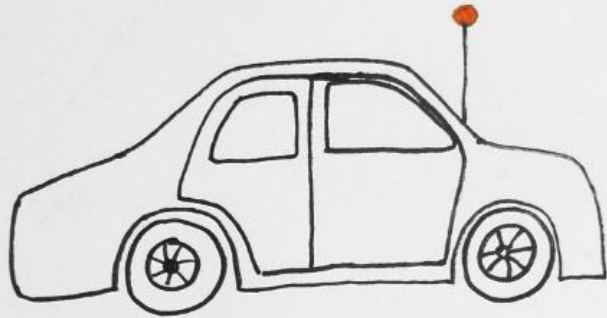
Taming the beast – emotions first but not only....

- It's **peer** review – not review by a deity
- It's not a comment on who you are
- I see your humiliating review and I raise you – **everybody** gets rejected
- You may hide under a rock but only a small rock and only for a short space of time (a week maximum, preferably shorter)
- **Tell someone**, share it, and commit to helping one another with dealing with reviews
- Most reviewers (not all) are trying their best



"Yeah, but good luck getting it peer-reviewed."

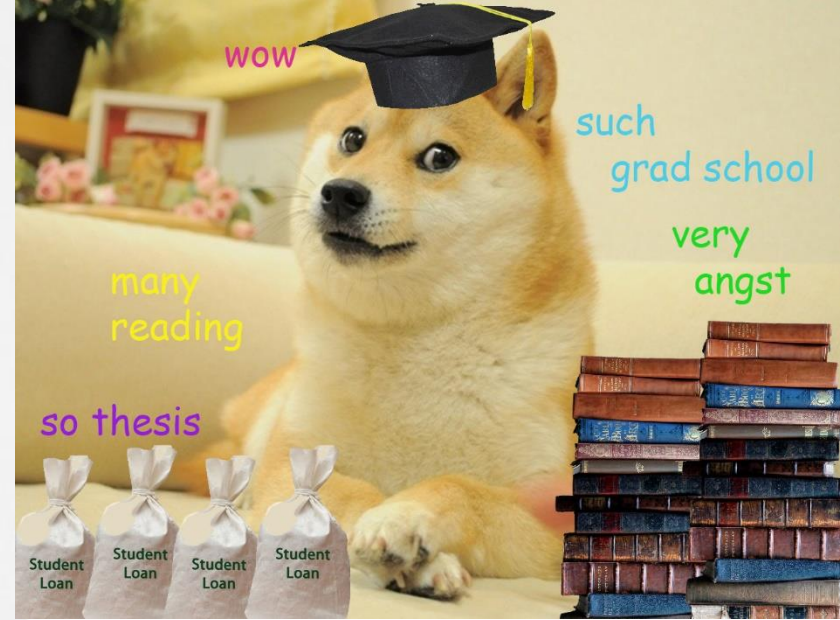
Your manuscript as submitted



... and after peer review and revision



REDPEN/BLACKPEN <http://redpenblackpen.jasonya.com>



Taming the beast – taking action

- Take it bit by bit – you must be able to show that you have responded to each and every comment
- No biting, no fighting
- There are two reasons why they misunderstand you:
 1. *They are idiots who cannot see your genius*
 2. *You have probably put things in such a way which has enabled their misunderstanding as readers of your work, who are not you and your friends*
- Always try to understand what they say, however hurtful

HAMLET

Do you see that cloud up there that looks like a camel?

POLONIUS

By th' mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed.

HAMLET

Methinks it is like a weasel.

POLONIUS

It is backed like a weasel.

HAMLET

Or like a whale.

POLONIUS

Very like a whale.



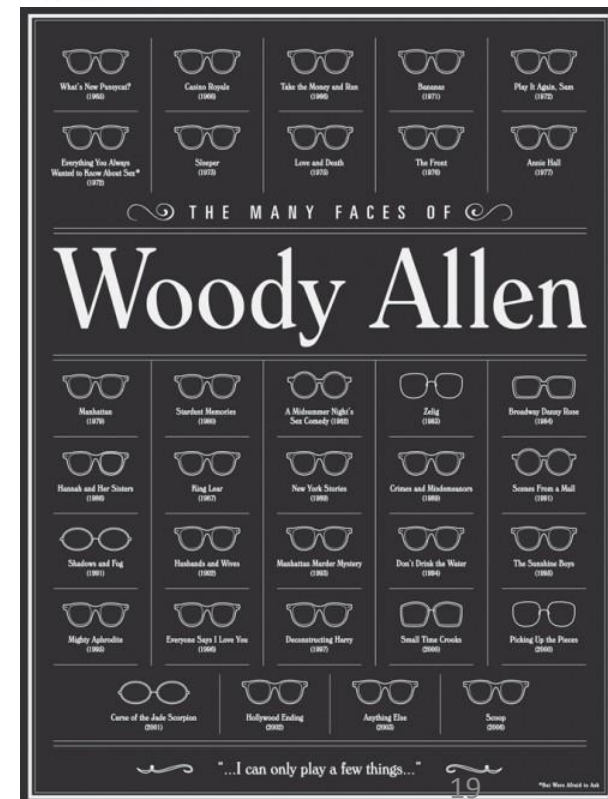
Taming the beast

– taking action 2

- Be polite – be very polite (pleaded the editor)
 - do the editor's job for her/him
- Say thank you, give compliments
- Be as clear as you can
- Reviewers will contradict each other – explain to the editor why you have done X and not Y
- If a reviewer in your view is absolutely wrong, first try the 'comradely greetings' approach, then be absolutely clear on why you can't do what they say
- You complain at your peril – journals are looking for reasons to reject you
- Have some empathy for the editor and the reviewers
- Be a nice, constructive, helpful reviewer next time



"We're encouraging people to become involved in their own rescue."



<p>Reviewer comments</p> <p>Reviewer A</p>	<p>Authors' response</p>
<p>This is an interesting paper on an important topic,</p>	<p>Thank you very much</p>
<p>but it fails to articulate its premises clearly...</p>	<p>Thank you for this helpful comment. On pp 2-3 of the revised manuscript we have made our position more explicit and have used bullet point formatting so these are easy to read</p>
<p>I was shocked that the brilliant work of Swartz (2017) was not cited</p>	<p>We apologise for this oversight, and we agree with the reviewer that this is a key reference. We have referenced Swartz (2017) now as well as Swartz and Bantjes (2016)</p>
<p>I would like to have seen more discussion of the Anthropocene</p>	<p>Thank you for this comment. Reviewer B (see our responses below) suggested that we omit any mention of the Anthropocene. We have decided to follow Reviewer B on this as we have space limitations but would be happy to reconsider should Reviewer A believe that this would be best for the article.</p>

Common reasons for rejection (my experience)

- Plagiarism
- Obviously pasted from a thesis
- Too much irrelevant detail
- Conclusions do not flow from data
- Data irrelevant to conclusions
- No idea of the field
- Over-grand claims to originality
- Wrong journal, wrong audience

File

Message

Tell me what you want to do...

Ignore

Junk

Delete

Reply

Reply All

Forward

Meeting

More

Archive_2011 -...

Team Email

Reply & Delete

To Manager

Done

Create New

Move

Rules

Actions

Assign Policy

Mark Unread

Categorize

Follow Up

Translate

Find

Related

Select

Zoom

Send to OneNote

Sun 2019/05/26 7:38 PM

Blockchain <lponce@agrorural.gob.pe>

Your airdrop of \$50 is ready

To

This message was sent with High importance.

Congratulations!

You have been chosen to receive \$50 in Stellar XLM as a valued Blockchain Wallet user.

To claim your free Stellar XLM, log in to your wallet and verify your identity. It only takes a few minutes. Once your identity is verified your XLM will be on its way to your wallet.

Better yet, you will also be automatically eligible to receive future giveaways.

[GET STARTED.](#)

File Message Tell me what you want to do...

Ignore Delete Reply Reply All Forward More Meeting Archive_2011 -... To Manager Team Email Done Reply & Delete Create New Rules Actions Move Assign Mark Categorize Follow Up Policy Unread Tags Translate Find Related Select Zoom

Thu 2019/04/11 8:45 PM
 urgent <igtechweb@gmail.com>
 I NEED ABSOLUTE KIND HEART

To

I am Ugonna Madueke a son of the recently embattled former petroleum minister of Nigeria Mrs Diezani Alison-Madueke . I am writing to request your honest assistance in receiving and managing a considerable sum of money in a secured account with a bank. In the heat of the current events with my mother, I have been asked by her manager to move the funds to aboard to avoid been confiscated. In the light of this I have appointed our age long family Attorney, Mr Fola Fawehinmi to oversee the movement of this fund in order to stay within the confines of ordinary law. I am therefore writing under the umbrella of his office and asking you to deal with him directly in this transaction.

These funds are surplus of several contracts executed during the years of her reign as the oil minister in her country Nigeria, I am offering you a total share of 30% as reward to you for standing in as a substitute beneficiary to the claim, an additional 5% is set aside to reimburse for expenses in the course of the transaction and the balance of 65% will be invested upon your strong recommendation in your chosen destination.

If you are willing to provide this assistance please forward your personal detail and mobile phone number(s) to the Attorney Fola Fawehinmi. Click on the link below to find more information on the reason I cannot deal directly with volunteers.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34430597>
<https://www.channelstv.com/2017/02/16/court-orders-final-forfeiture-of-n34bn-allegedly-linked-to-diezani/>
<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/298794-court-grants-efcc-permission-to-prosecute-diezani-alison-madueke-omokore.htm>

A Memorandum of understanding and Agreement will be in place to protect each one of us in this transaction and enforceable in any local court of law All documents relating to this transaction will be legitimate and verifiable from all relevant authorities.

We look forward to a great business relationship.

Regards,



To Swartz, Leslie [lswartz@sun.ac.za]

Dear Swartz Leslie,

Please consider as a friendly reminder!!

Current Research in Hydrology and Water resources is a newly launched open access journal with a fast review process within 11-21 days from the date of submission.

Thus, we request you to submit any kind of article like **Research/Review/Case report/Video/Short Communication/Review/Image Articles/Letter to Editor/Opinion/Perspective/Book review/Editorial** etc.

Happy to inform you regarding our initiative launch of inaugural issue which is running successfully. As eminent scholars we would like to have your support to make it more successful, here with your valuable manuscript to include in the inaugural issue of the journal that we are planning.

If you have any manuscript ready for submission kindly submit at this <https://gavinpub.com>

We hope you will accept our invitation and support this issue with your contribution.

Thank you.

Unbelievable submission: HIJ - Message (HTML)

FileMessageTell me what you want to do...

Ignore

Junk

Delete

Reply

Reply All

Forward

More

Archive_2011 -...

Team Email

Reply & Delete

To Manager

Done

Create New

Move

Rules

Actions

Assign Policy

Mark Unread

Categorize

Follow Up

Translate

Find

Related

Select

Zoom

International Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Journal <pmr@medcravegroup.com>

Swartz, Leslie [lswartz@sun.ac.za]

12:22 PM

Unbelievable submission: HIJ

You forwarded this message on 2019/01/23 1:16 PM.

Dear Dr. Leslie Swartz,

Greetings from MedCrave.!

My approach is to inform that I need your obligatory submission towards our journal **International Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Journal** on or before end of this month. I am very miserable that we left far away in receiving the required articles for upcoming issue, which I am facing for the first time. So in this phase I elected you to have your incredible support to hold us for the eventful releasing of the issues. Hence I heartily request you to submit at least short article of your choice to save me from this unfortunate period.

Keen to have your manuscript by the end of this day. Please send us as an attachment to this email id or else you can use the below link for online submission
<http://medcraveonline.com/submitManuscript>

In fact your single article sustains us a lot and impacts my ranking in end of the month.

Looking for your unbelievable submission.

Clement
MedCrave Group
Editorial Office
Suite 600 Novi, USA

If you wish to not to receive our e-mails, kindly [unsubscribe](#)

Windows Taskbar

System Tray

BEALL'S LIST OF PREDATORY JOURNALS AND PUBLISHERS

[PUBLISHERS](#)[STANDALONE JOURNALS](#)[CONTACT](#)[OTHER](#)[THINK CHECK SUBMIT](#)

Potential, possible, or probable predatory scholarly open-access publishers

This is a list of questionable, scholarly open-access publishers. We recommend that scholars read the available reviews, assessments and descriptions provided here, and then decide for themselves whether they want to submit articles, serve as editors or on editorial boards. In a few cases, non-open access publishers whose practices match those of predatory publishers have been added to the list as well. The criteria for determining predatory publishers are [here](#).

We hope that tenure and promotion committees can also decide for themselves how importantly or not to rate articles published in these journals in the context of their own institutional standards and/or geocultural locus. We emphasize that journal publishers and journals change in their business and editorial practices over time. This list is kept up-to-date to the best extent possible but may not reflect sudden, unreported, or unknown enhancements.

- [1088 Email Press](#)
- [2425 Publishers](#)

News



[Nature: Predatory journals recruit fake editor](#)

Other important lists

PLOS Medicine: A Peer-Reviewed Journal

journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/

HARVARD T.H. CHAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The Department of Global Health and Population is seeking a Professor of Global Health

plos.org create account sign in

Browse Publish About Search

advanced search

April 5, 2016

A Nested Case-Control Study of Metabolically Defined Body Size Phenotypes and Colorectal Cancer Risk

Marc Gunter and colleagues analyze a large European dataset to determine how body size and metabolic profile associates with the risk of developing colorectal cancer.

Image credit: Nepton, Wikimedia Commons

journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1001988

04/05/2016 RECENTLY PUBLISHED ARTICLES

AOSIS Publishing

AFRICAN Journal of Disability

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The African Journal of Disability, the official journal of CRS, AfrinEAD and CEDRES, is published for the purpose of advancing scholarship in disability studies and rehabilitation sciences in a uniquely African context. Widely read by scholars, professionals and students, it encourages scholarly exchange between all disciplines and academics from both the developing and developed worlds to work towards the improvement of human development and its practices across the continent.

Editor-in-Chief: Leslie Swartz, Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

Affiliations: Centre for Rehabilitation Studies (South Africa), Center for Disability and Rehabilitation Studies (Ghana) and African Network for Evidence-to-Action in Disability (South Africa).

Latest articles

Original Research **Preparation of students with disabilities to graduate into professions in the South African context of higher learning: Obstacles and opportunities**
Sibemokhele Ndlovu, Elizabeth Walton
Vol 5, No 1 (2016), 9 pages
Published: 2016-03-03

Original Research **Use of consumer wireless devices by South Africans with severe communication disability**
Juan Bormann, Diane Nelson Bryen, Enid Moolman, John Morris
Vol 5, No 1 (2016), 9 pages
Published: 2016-03-03

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Hayley Bennett
Postdoctoral Fellow
Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute

South African Journal of Science

volume 117
number 1/2

High lightning risk for rural communities in SA

Predicting take-up of home loans using tree-based ensemble models

Monitoring and conservation of terrestrial and marine ecosystems in SA

Hominin lower limb bones from Sterkfontein Caves

HIV self-testing is user-friendly and accurate

ASSAf