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A MULTIFACETED approach can be effective in solving the perennial problem of predatory journals that have become a serious threat to academic integrity.

While the problem is deep-rooted, Prof Datuk Dr Zulkifli Idrus said a long-term solution lies in a concerted effort to increase awareness among researchers concerning predatory publishing.

The Universiti Putra Malaysia deputy vice-chancellor (research and innovation) said predatory publishing should be more frequently discussed during scientific meetings.

“Senior professors and mentors should educate students, researchers and anyone else interested in learning more about predatory journals.

“We have to convey a clear message that what and where we publish matters.

“Structured training in research integrity and research ethics is also required,” he told *StarEdu*.

On March 7, *StarEdu* highlighted a recent survey which shockingly revealed that Malaysia ranked fifth in “fraudulent publications”.

The survey was conducted by two Czech Republic economists, Vit Machacek and Martin Srholec, in their paper “Predatory Publishing in Scopus: Evidence on Cross-country Differences”.

It was published in *Scientometrics*, an international journal for quantitative aspects of science, and science communication and policy, last month.

Machacek and Srholec analysed data from 172 countries in four fields of research between 2015

# An end in sight

## More awareness needed to weed out predatory publishing



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and 2017.

They mapped the infiltration of journals suspected of predatory practices into the citation database Scopus, which is used to gauge tertiary institutions worldwide in annual ranking reports.

“There is a need to educate academic staff on identifying potential predatory journals through ongoing

outreach efforts.

“Come up with a whitelist of publishers and journals where academic staff are encouraged to publish; this could help stem the issue of predatory journals and improve publication visibility and significance to our stakeholders,” Prof Zulkifli explained.

He pointed out that through

thorough vetting of the publication process through the stages of submission, review and acceptance, university authorities would have a better grasp of the quality of the journal publication.

“This approach would also provide the right pathway for research knowledge to be disseminated.

“The end goal is for this knowl-

edge to permeate and impact the quintuple innovation helix framework for research and development.”

This framework involves university-industry-government-public-environment interactions.

He said an academic’s publication numbers have been a significant yardstick of academic performance in the country.

“For example, to be an associate professor or professor, we need to have a certain number of papers. This overemphasis, in turn, may lead young academics to publish in predatory journals.

“I believe it is high time we focused more on the quality and impact of our publications,” he said, adding that citations may be a better measure of scholarly output.

Publishing in a reputable journal, he said, takes time and patience as the rejection rates are often very high and it takes a long time to be accepted.

Academics who are passionate about disseminating scholarly output knowledge without sacrificing their integrity, he said, will have no issues following the “tortuous but righteous pathway”.

“Predatory journals offer rapid publication, with minimal or non-existent scrutiny of materials.

“There is a possibility that academics publishing in these journals may not be aware of their predatory nature.

“Rapid and guaranteed publication with no rejection is among the major draws to entice academics to publish in predatory journals.

“Policing these predatory journals would be extremely difficult, as there is no central repository body to regulate these publishers,” he pointed out.