

Demystifying Open Access: Exploring Publishing Literacy and Awareness among Health Science Researchers

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This study provides a thorough evaluation of Open Access (OA) awareness and publication literacy among health science academics, concentrating on their comprehension of OA publishing formats, copyright regulations, funding processes, and the recognition of predatory journals. As the global demand for accessible and transparent scientific research escalates, it is crucial to assess researchers' readiness to adeptly navigate the changing open access scenario. The study employed a mixed-method approach to poll health science academics from several institutions, assessing their understanding of essential open access concepts, such as Gold, Green, and Hybrid access paths. The results indicated a notable gap in understanding, as numerous participants struggle to differentiate between OA models or express the subtleties of transformative agreements and the function of institutional repositories. Clinical researchers exhibited inferior literacy levels relative to their peers in the basic sciences. Furthermore, early-career researchers indicated increased challenges in publication selection, comprehending copyright retention, and maneuvering through intricate open access policy frameworks. Three significant areas of deficiency were identified: inadequate comprehension of copyright retention and licensing alternatives; incapacity to critically assess the quality and legitimacy of open access journals, resulting in susceptibility to predatory publishing; and ambiguity regarding funder mandates and compliance obligations. The identified inadequacies underscored significant systemic problems, such as insufficient institutional support, absence of formal training in academic communication, and ambiguity regarding open access publishing revenue models and Article Processing Charges (APC). The research outlines the necessity for focused educational programs and institutional policy changes to close the knowledge gap. Recommendations encompass the establishment of organized OA training modules, incorporation of publishing literacy into graduate and faculty development initiatives, and enhanced institutional direction regarding funding options and repository utilization. By tackling these problems, the health science community may more efficiently adopt OA publication, enhance research exposure, and guarantee adherence to changing funder and institutional requirements.

Keywords: *Article Processing Charges (APC); Funder compliance; Open access; Publishing literacy; Transformative agreements*