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Clarivate Analytics Mysteriously De-Indexes Key Journals



Posted by Phil Lankers — February 22, 2018 in Cancer Research

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A puzzling decision was made by research data management giant Clarivate Analytics, owner of Web of Science, a company created by the 2016 acquisition of the Thomson Reuters Intellectual Property & Science business by Onex Corporation and Baring Private Equity Asia. Clarivate Analytics is known for their collection of journal indexes, including Web of Science™, Cortellis™, Thomson Innovation™ and many others.

Given Clarivate Analytics' recent acquisition of assets such as Thompson Reuter, and more recently Publons in June of 2017, it could appear that the company may be seeking to gain vertical integration and complete dominance in the research industry for profit, a problematic prospect in an industry that crucially requires transparent operation. The Directory of Open Access Journals has a statement at DOAJ.org which reads:

"DOAJ does not believe in the value of impact factors, does not condone their use on journal web sites, does not recognise partial impact factors, and advocates any official, alternative measure of use, such as article level metrics. There is only one official, universally recognised impact factor that is generated by Thomson Reuters; it is a proprietary measure run by a profit-making organisation. **This runs against the ethics and principles of open access and DOAJ is impact-factor agnostic. DOAJ does not collect metadata on impact factors. Displaying impact factors on a home page is strongly discouraged and DOAJ perceives this as an attempt to lure authors in a dishonest way.**

Questions were raised when, on January 15, 2018, on the master list of 2018 journals to be indexed in their database, Clarivate excluded a number of previously listed journals. Among these is Oncotarget, a respected peer-reviewed journal with a consistently high impact factor that is of critical importance for researchers working in the field of oncology. It sparked an outcry amongst Chinese scientists who are mandated to publish in this index in order to obtain advanced degrees in science.

Zhibin Huo, Professor and Chairman of the Department of Surgical Oncology, Affiliated Xingtai Peoples Hospital of Hebei Medical University, is organizing protests across the country and represents a group of outraged authors who are demanding that Oncotarget negotiate with WOS. Huo vowed "we will not stop protesting in every way unless our papers are confirmed to be indexed in WOS" and moving forward with a [petition](#).



Some authors have gone as far as claiming racial discrimination by Clarivate. Furthermore, Oncotarget has received emails from a PHD student – along with a subsequent email from his lab manager and institution – indicating that they will not be receiving their degree and the student is now threatening suicide.

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This exclusion coupled with rising public concern across the globe raises questions and speculations about Clarivate's process, particularly given Oncotarget's high impact factor, decade long index reputation, and exceptional editorial board members. Nobel Prize winner and Oncotarget editorial board member Andrew V. Schally described Oncotarget as "An outstanding and most important journal in the field of oncology and cancer research."

In 2015-2016 Scopus Journal Rankings selected Oncotarget as the #1 ranking Oncology Journal by total documents, and in the fall of 2017 even Clarivate themselves praised Oncotarget by honoring the Journal as one of their 14 featured ["Rising Star" journals for 2017](#).

The industry remains perplexed by the question of why this important journal was suddenly excluded from Clarivate Analytics' 2018 database without any prior notice whatsoever.

In fact, given the non-transparent and abrupt notion in which Clarivate regularly suppresses journal titles, it raises a series of key questions, such as:

Why is Clarivate de-indexing so many journals when it serves such a vital role in the dissemination of information?

Should the medical media question Clarivate's credibility when they are owned by private equity firms in China and there are government mandates for Chinese researchers to publish in journals which are indexed in WOS?

What is Clarivate's position on the damage to science, the researchers, and the journals they suddenly drop?

Will they continue vertical integration and private, non-transparent for-profit practices to suppress journal titles without explanation?

While Clarivate Analytics has made no comment and expressed no willingness to discuss their decision, Oncotarget published on its own site a notice stating, "We remain perplexed by the abrupt decision to not include Oncotarget into the master list of the journals for 2018 without advanced notice and clear grounds. We are actively working to understand and rectify the situation." Upon reaching out to Oncotarget they indicated that Clarivate's attorneys had taken over the discussion and have not yet replied to a series of questions from the Journal's representatives.

Not only has Clarivate Analytics not published a de-indexed journals list, but they remain committed to doing so with seemingly vague justification.

The mystery remains and may perhaps trigger concern and investigation within the medical research community in regard to fiduciary conflicts of interest.

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About the Author: **Phil Lankers**

From an early age, Phil knew he wanted to work in media Growing up in southern California., the television in the Lankers household was always on and tuned to CNN morning, noon and night. But Phil still managed to find time to spend the summers on golf courses and the winter on the ski hills. Aaron graduated from the University of Victoria with a major in political science and a minor in history. Contact Phil [here](#)

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