

Perils of Publishing Papers

By Philip A. Baer, MDCM, FRCPC, FACR

In 2013, I read a paper on treatment trends in psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis (PsA). The lead author was an American dermatology researcher, Dr. April Armstrong.¹ As I noted in a *Journal of the Canadian Rheumatology Association (CRAJ)* editorial on the topic of cyberbullying in 2015,² in the instructions regarding the corresponding author, I found a comment that I had never before seen in a scientific paper. The author provided her email address, followed by instructions indicating that her address was provided "for intellectual questions regarding the article only."

Fast forward to July 2024, and I was listed as the corresponding author for a scientific manuscript reporting the results of the ADAGIO study: "A Canadian Retrospective Chart Review Evaluating Concomitant Methotrexate De-escalation Patterns in Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis Treated with Biologic or Targeted Synthetic DMARDs" published in the open access journal *Rheumatology and Therapy*. Did I think to use a disposable email address? No, I just listed my most commonly used email address. A major error on my part.

The article was published on July 9, 2024. Since then, no one has corresponded with me about the scientific merits of the paper, which our team of Canadian authors and our statistical analysts are ready to defend. Of course, being published as open access, no one needs to write to me to request a reprint.

However, my SPAM folder is being bombarded by emails linked to having publishing an article. At first, I discarded them without reading beyond the subject line. But as they kept coming, I started saving them as raw material for this *CRAJ* article. Between July 29th and September 16th, 2024, I counted 56 emails, more than one a day.

Publishing our paper did not unearth any Nigerian princes needing my help to unlock millions of dollars in a secret bank account. However, I did learn that my talents were apparently sorely needed in many aspects of science and medicine. Those reaching out to me included "George Orwell", who died of tuberculosis (TB) in 1950, and "Selena Gomez", who has severe lupus which led to a kidney transplant, but did not require my expertise on that matter. George said on September 15th, 2024:

We hope you're doing well. We'd like to invite you to submit your research to our journal, Rehabilitation Medicine. The most recent edition is lacking one article. Could you kindly aid us by contributing an article to this edition of the journal by September 29, 2024? Please consider

contributing a research paper, review paper, mini-review, or case study. We believe that a two-page paper will be manageable for you, given your expertise, even on short notice. We have faith in your ongoing availability to assist us.

George, your faith in me is misplaced.

Selena said:

Austin Journal of Orthopedics & Rheumatology with Impact factor 2.4 very glad (sic) and honored to request you to submit a manuscript on your current research area, which falls under journal scope.

All the short/full length manuscripts are accepted for publication in the journal and every published manuscript will be given DOI number after publication. Minimum Article Processing Charges will be charged for the manuscripts, which are submitted on or before September 15th, 2024.

Kindly submit your manuscript as an attachment to this mail.

Selena, it's nice to know that your journal features a 100% acceptance rate for submitted manuscripts. From your email, it looks like proper grammar is not required.

A sample of other emails follows:

Greetings from the Journal of Acta Psychopathologica...Your work entitled "A Canadian Retrospective Chart Review Evaluating Concomitant Methotrexate De-escalation Patterns in Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis Treated with Biologic or Targeted Synthetic DMARDs" has left a great imprint in the area of Psychology, where we would like to use our journal to bring the spotlight on your achievements. We are privileged to invite all eminent personalities to send scientific manuscripts related to our journal. In return, your research work shall be properly cited and threaded to the scientific world upon a single click.

Greetings, esteemed Baer PA, We tried multiple times but received no response from you. We'd like to contact you again as a polite reminder.

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We're lacking one article for the new edition. Is it possible for you to provide us with an article for this edition of the Annals of Musculoskeletal Medicine (ISSN: 2640-8139) on or before October 15, 2024? We accept all types of publications, including research, reviews, and case reports. If you have short notice, please offer a two-page opinion, mini-review, or case report. We hope a two-page article is not too time-consuming for you. [Chronic Pain & Management (ISSN: 2576-957X) Journal Impact Factor: 2.18* Scopus Impact Factor: 1.20* PubMed Indexed (NIH Funded), SCI Indexed, Index Copernicus, etc.]

Dear Doctor, Greetings for the day. The journal would like to take this pleasure in inviting experts like you for contribution of a manuscript in the forthcoming issue. All types of manuscripts are welcome for possible publication in this issue. Let me know your possibility in this regard. Note: If you are ready with the manuscript, kindly submit to this mail or let me know your feasible date for contribution in our journal. All COVID related articles are welcomed in our journal. We look forward for a strong and productive scientific relationship with you. (American Journal of Internal Medicine (AJIM) e-ISSN: 2330-4324)

Dear P.A. Baer, With a broad selection of disciplines represented, this platform boasts 300+ open-access journals, providing a global stage for your research. Currently, over 115 journals have maintained a consistent publication streak of a decade. AJIM is an international journal published on this platform, acting as a space for the exchange of powerful ideas among academics and practitioners. Owing to the expertise shown in your paper published before "A Canadian Retrospective Chart Review Evaluating Concomitant Methotrexate De-escalation Patterns in Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis Treated with Biologic or Targeted Synthetic DMARDs", we want to invite you to contribute works in your specialized/interested research fields.

Greetings from Fortune Journal of Rheumatology [(ISSN: 2688-6766) PubMed Indexed and Impact Factor: 1.7.] We have experienced one of your articles entitled "a Canadian retrospective chart review evaluating concomitant methotrexate de-escalation patterns in patients with rheumatoid arthritis treated with biologic or targeted synthetic dmards." So, we cordially invite you to submit same or similar article (research/review/short communication article) for publication in

the upcoming issues of our journal. Your expertise is well-known, and we believe your contribution would greatly enhance our upcoming issue.

Rossella wrote:

Hope this mail finds you in high spirits. We are following your publications and research works, those are very interesting. Your work is too valuable to us (*Really?*) and it's perfectly fit for our journals. Hence, we kindly request you to submit your worthy articles towards our Journal. Your contribution adds value towards the "Annals of Case Reports" growth and also helps in releasing the upcoming issue.

Another new friend, Angela, chimed in:

Respected Doctor, (Journal of Clinical Case Reports Medical Images and Health Sciences (JCR-MHS) An open access, peers reviewed, Academic and Research, Online and Print Journal ISSN: 2832-1286 Impact Factor: 1.6*.) Based on your eminence and contribution towards the research community we request you to publish your work in our journal. You are invited to submit your paper for the Current Issue of our Journal. Current Issue: Issue 02 (2024). Publication Charges will be waived off, if you submit your manuscript on or before October 15th, 2024 (DOI charges are applicable).

Neli piqued my interest:

Dear Esteemed Author, we appreciate your contributions towards the scientific research community, which inspired many young researchers in accomplishing their knowledge. Your article published with the title "A Canadian Retrospective Chart Review Evaluating Concomitant Methotrexate De-escalation Patterns in..." has received huge response from the readers (*Only from people like you*). We wish to collaborate with you and hence would like to inquire about the new article submission for fast-track review. If you have any similar or new article for publication in the forthcoming issue of our Journal of Orthopaedics and Sports Medicine (ISSN: 2688-5115); PubMed and PMC Indexed, IF: 4.3.)

Masanori was kind enough to promote me to Professor:

Dear Prof. Baer Philip A, Greetings for the Day!! We tried several times but there is no response from your side, please submit your manuscript.

We understand your priorities and professional commitments. It would not be appropriate at this point in time to overburden you by asking you to write/contribute a full-length manuscript. So, we kindly request you to submit at least 2 pages of Editorial or 150 Words Clinical Image or Letter to Editor to our journal. You can definitely submit your Original Research, Case Reports and Review Articles also. Note: There is no specific (sic) topic for this issue, it's completely depends on your current research.

Rita had me confused with my son, who is an actuary:

We contacted you on 7th of August, regarding a Special Issue entitled "Statistical Research on Missing Data and Applications", to be published in the journal *Mathematics* (ISSN 2227-7390, IF 2.3). Dr. Soeun Kim is serving as Guest Editor for this issue. Based on your expertise in this field, we think you could make an excellent contribution. This Special Issue is focused on the topic of statistical research on missing data and applications. Papers related to the theoretical or methodological aspects of statistical methods for dealing with missing data, as well as papers focused on the application of analyzing data with missing values, are welcome to be submitted to this Special Issue.

Other than George, I notice my new correspondents are all presenting as women. I can't help but wonder if men would be writing to me if my name was Phyllis instead of Philip. They are also very persistent, frequently scolding me for ignoring their initial emails.

I was also invited to present our research at international conferences. Examples:

The 21st Annual Congress of International Drug Discovery Science & Technology (IDDST-2025)
Invitation Letter:

Dear Friend, Greetings and Warm Wishes from the Committee of IDDST. We want to give you a brief update regarding the 2025 Annual Congress. IDDST Committee is delighted to invite you to Kobe, Japan for 21st IDDST-2025, which will be held during May 12-14, 2025 (Next Year) and present a talk on A Canadian Retrospective Chart Review Evaluating Concomitant Methotrexate De-escalation Patterns in... If you plan to change a topic, please reply this email and send the speech title to Ms. Irene at your earliest convenience. As soon as we receive this information, we can then finalize the details of your presentation.

And from my friend Ms. Sophie:

We are proud to announce that the 9th Annual World Congress of Orthopaedics (WCORT-2025) will be held during 18-20 June, 2025 at Stockholm, Sweden. As per your background in this field, we are sincerely welcoming you to deliver a talk as Speaker/Chair about orthopaedics and traumatology.

Alma first wrote to me as follows:

We are honored to invite you to the 13th World Gene Congress, which will be held at Crowne Plaza Blanchardstown, Dublin, Ireland, from October 16 to 18, 2024. Based upon your background in the field, it is an honor to welcome you to deliver a talk about A Canadian Retrospective Chart Review Evaluating Concomitant Methotrexate De-escalation Patterns in Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis Treated with Biologic or Targeted Synthetic DMARDs as Speaker at this conference. What do you think?

I didn't think much of this or respond, but Alma is persistent. Her second email:

Hope my e-mail finds you well. I'm writing from conference organizing committee. Sorry to bother you. I just want to check if you have a plan to join our forthcoming meeting "The 14th World Gene Convention 2025", which has been scheduled on April 23-25, 2025, in Nara, Japan, and give a speech on A Canadian Retrospective Chart Review Evaluating Concomitant Methotrexate De-escalation Patterns in Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis Treated with Biologic or Targeted Synthetic DMARDs.

Other conferences I had never heard of invited me to present our research findings, including the Global Conference on Rheumatic and Autoimmune Disorders (RhAD-2025), and I was also invited to become a reviewer for many obscure journals.

My plan: don't submit to any of these journals, don't plan to attend any of these conferences, and set up an email filter focused on the word "Greetings," which seems to be a common theme in these invitations.

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References:

1. Armstrong AW, Robertson AD, Wu J, et al. Undertreatment, treatment trends, and treatment dissatisfaction among patients with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis in the United States: Findings from the National Psoriasis Foundation surveys, 2003–2011. *JAMA Dermatol* 2013; 149(10):1180-5.
2. Baer, P. Cyberbullying: Online Anxieties. Available at <http://craj.ca/archives/2015/English/Spring/Editorial.html>. Accessed March 30, 2025.