

A Note on Contemporary Publication Ethics

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Introduction

Recently, this journal and I came under vicious attack by two blog sites that have fairly intolerant views on a number of environmental issues, the most notable of which is climate change. The first harsh critique was presented on a website titled...and Then There's Physics [1]. In a May 17, 2017 posting (<https://andthentheresphysics.wordpress.com/2017/05/17/seems-omics-international-will-publish-anything/>), a paper published by *Environment Pollution and Climate Change* (EPCC) was irreverently dismissed because it questioned the nature of the atmospheric greenhouse effect. The (anonymous) author scornfully declares:

...it seems unlikely that the extremely low carbon-dioxide concentration of 0.04 percent is able to co-warm the entire atmosphere to a perceptible extent.

And an argument from incredulity to end. Brilliant! I suspect I don't really need to say anything more. I've never published anything in an OMICS International journal (at least, I don't think I have) and, after this, I certainly don't have any intention of starting now.

The discussion went on to criticize EPCC's publication fees as if they were unique and/or excessive. However, the author fails to disclose that publication fees are ubiquitous in the realm of academic publishing, and that many "top tier" journals have fee structures that are significantly higher than EPCC's fees. Another concern raised by the author had to do with EPCC's turnaround times on publication submissions. The author harshly criticized EPCC's "rapid" turnaround time, yet failed to mention that most top-tier journals currently offer expedited peer review. By way of comparison, EPCC's turnaround times are on a par with expedited reviews for the *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, *Journal of Climate*, and *Geophysical Research Letters*, among others.

Shortly after this post appeared, a more vitriolic campaign was launched by a dogmatic website known as DeSmog Blog. This British-based site has brutally attacked a number of climate "skeptics" in the past, many of whom have had long and distinguished careers in the climate/environmental sciences [2]. The list includes such luminaries as John Coleman (founder of the Weather Channel), William Happer (endowed professor of physics at Princeton University), Jay Lehr (Executive Director of the National Association of Groundwater Scientists and Engineers), Patrick Michaels (former president of the American Association of State Climatologists), S. Fred Singer (founder of the satellite services branch of the National Weather Service) and Richard Lindzen (endowed professor of meteorology at MIT).

In an article titled "Editor of New 'Sham Journal' Is Climate Science Denier with Ties to Heartland Institute" DeSmog Blog's journalist, Graham Readfearn, attacked me, the Heartland Institute, and EPCC [3]. He boldly declared that some of the papers published in EPCC were "garbage and ridiculous." He founded his assertion on the fact that we have (to date) published "six papers claiming to refute the science linking human activity to dangerous climate change — claims that run counter to the conclusions of all the world's major science academies." In other words, if you buck the established line of thinking on anthropogenic global warming, DeSmog Blog will smear you as best it can.

This is a preferred tactic of those who believe they have the exclusive right to address the global warming "problem." The most publicized case of this sort of misconduct involved a reputable journal (*Climate Research*) and its publisher, Otto Kinne. When Kinne refused to give the journal's editor-in-chief (Hans von Storch) permission to rebut a "skeptical" paper that was published in *Climate Research*, von Storch and two other editors resigned in protest [4]. More importantly, the journal was blacklisted by a number of "alarmists" as they instructed others to avoid publishing in its pages. Thus, the seamy behavior of disfranchising contrarians on the global warming issue is a long-standing practice in the "alarmist" camp.

The way to deal with this outlandish behavior is to carefully deconstruct any unfounded allegations piece by piece. In a news release published by the Heartland Institute, ("Clearing up the DeSmog Blog: Reducing Online Pollution, <https://www.heartland.org/news-opinion/news/clearing-up-the-desmog-blog-reducing-online-pollution>), I responded to the charge that I had conducted shoddy research in a brief but reasoned rebuttal [5]. In effect, I pointed to the fact that the expert they called on to critique my work (Dr. Steven Sherwood) had clearly neglected to read my work in any great detail. As I said in the news release:

What I gather from this is that Mr. Sherwood has neither read the details of my work nor has he read the research that my work references. My advice to him and all of his compatriots at DeSmog blog is this: do your homework. If you have done the homework (i.e., thoroughly read my work and the accompanying references) and still stand by what you've said in your blog, then I will state for the record that you are...true deniers.

As for the allegations that EPCC is a "sham journal", I will state for the record that we engage in a fair and rigorous review process. All published materials are accepted on the merits of their scholarship and there is no deception, favoritism or fraud on the part of this journal. To say otherwise would be, at best, misinformed, and at worst, unethical. If other parties disagree with some of the materials we have posted, then they have the right, and to some extent, the obligation, to craft thoughtful, intelligent arguments to the contrary. To engage in libelous discourse, however, is not acceptable behavior in the professional literature. The "alarmists" in this debate should heed the words of Aristotle who said: "It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it." How profound!

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