publishing is not exclusive to OA journals. Open access journals do not necessarily charge fees and charging fees is not necessarily a sign that a journal is predatory. The legitimacy and quality of journals lies on a spectrum and these may be judged differently by different scientists.

Jeffrey Beall, a librarian at the University of Colorado at Denver, is a watchdog of predatory publishers. Since 2010, he has produced Beall’s List of predatory OA publishers (now numbering almost 700) and standalone journals. There are a number of aquaculture journals from publishers on Beall’s List. Beall estimates that 5-10 percent of all OA articles are published in predatory journals.

Beall has come under criticism for bias, including an emphasis on listing publishers in developing countries, and for overstating the seriousness of the problem. However, he has developed criteria for evaluating predatory publishers and journals based on honesty, transparency and business practices. Examples of these include unsolicited invitations to submit articles for publication, minimal or no peer review and high manuscript acceptance rates, among others.

Beall’s List is effectively a blacklist, but there are alternative approaches. A whitelist called the Directory of Open Access Journals includes quality standards and a vetting process for inclusion of open access publishers and journals in the directory.

Members of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association must adhere to a code of conduct that prohibits predatory practices.

What can be done? Perhaps most importantly, evaluate the peer-review and quality control procedures of a journal. Promises of rapid publication should be considered a red flag for low-quality and potentially predatory journals. Be wary of spam solicitations to submit articles for publication or to join the editorial boards of OA journals. Inquire about author fees if no clear policy is posted on the journal website or in an email manuscript solicitation. Evaluate the expertise and qualifications of the editorial board of open access journals. Read some articles published by the journal before submitting a manuscript.

Reputable journals can be identified from lists maintained by the Thomson Reuters Web of Science – Journal Citation Reports or Scopus, as well as whitelists of OA journals maintained by the Directory of Open Access Journals and the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association. Aquaculture scientists need to remain vigilant on this issue and to guard against supporting unethical and unscrupulous publishers of OA journals lacking effective quality control mechanisms. Learning and thinking critically about this issue is part of scientific literacy and professionalism.

— John A. Hargreaves, Editor-in-Chief

I have been a WAS member since 1984 and helped organize the WAS meeting in Natal in 2011. I’ve had the honor of publishing two articles in World Aquaculture magazine. My company, PRIMAR, located in northeastern Brazil, has been in business for 23 years producing organic oysters and shrimp.

The reason that generated this message is a little bit delicate. Reading the article authored by Rocha and Nunes about shrimp farming in Brazil in the June issue, it seemed as if they were talking about another country. The reality is that shrimp production is falling due to white-spot virus (WSV) that is spreading from the south to the north. Three years ago, WSV reached much of the production zone between Bahia and southern Rio Grande do Norte. This year WSV reached northern Rio Grande do Norte and part of Ceará. Currently, more than 3/4 of the productive area is suffering and larger companies with high fixed costs have been decimated. The leadership of Ceará was obtained because WSV hit much of the Rio Grande do Norte production first. Brazilian shrimp production will continue to fall as WSV spreads to production areas in Ceará.

Brazilian shrimp exports have fallen mainly due to antidumping action by the USA, an adverse exchange rate and low economic efficiency of farms compared to Ecuador, for example. Since the anti-dumping action in 2005, almost all production has been sold on the domestic market, which grew by many years as the country’s economy kept growing. Brazil currently faces a strong economic crisis and prices in the domestic market have dropped. Recently the advance of WSV to the north caused the emergency harvest of thousands of hectares simultaneously and the price dropped as much as 40 percent. Indeed, it is difficult to sell shrimp even at the lowest price.

In an interview with Dr. Itamar Rocha, one of the authors of the World Aquaculture article, published in the Tribuna do Norte newspaper in July, he corroborated a lot of this information. In the interview, Dr. Rocha said that the “crisis in the international market, viral diseases, natural disasters and bureaucracy considered excessive for issuing environmental licenses caused, in a decade, a 54.7 percent reduction in shrimp production in Rio Grande do Norte (RN).”

In the World Aquaculture article, the authors also “forgot” to say that most shrimp farms in Brazil remain illegal, without proper environmental license. This is not an opinion. Facts are indisputable. It is important to read the message on the “Shrimp List” by Mr. Werner Jost, a pioneer in biofloc shrimp production in Brazil (www.shrimpnews.com/FreeReportsFolder/NewsReportsFolder/BrazilWernerJostsCommentsOnBrazilArticle.html).

I know it must be hard for World Aquaculture magazine to evaluate the truth of information provided because it came from, after all, the president of the Brazilian Shrimp Growers Association. Unfortunately however, this time the article you published is completely out of tune.

Alexandre Alter Wainberg
PRIMAR, Rio Grande de Norte, Brazil