Correspondence

Share mobile data to curb COVID-19

Open sharing of clinical, epidemiological and virological data between governments and researchers during the current COVID-19 pandemic is shaping international public-health strategies. However, digital data from billions of mobile phones and footprints from web searches and social media remain largely inaccessible to researchers and governments. These data could support community surveillance, contact tracing, social mobilization, health promotion, communication with the public and evaluation of public-health interventions.

We urge technology companies to work with researchers and governments to find ways to share their data rapidly in a legal, proportionate, ethical and privacy-preserving manner. The public's consent to sharing personal data for the common good can be obtained dynamically through existing mobile applications, putting the public at the heart of the public-health response to COVID-19. We ask governments and funders to create new centres of digital public health to deploy and evaluate proven innovations.

The technology sector has benefited from massive public investment in the Internet, the GPS and mobile technologies. Now is the time for tech to invest in society.

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Predatory journals: dodging the radar

Agnes Grudniewicz and colleagues highlight the need to define what constitutes a predatory journal (*Nature* **576**, 210–212; 2019). History shows, however, that such journals and their publishers rapidly adapt to filters that might discredit them.

In their early days, such journals were ephemeral, with false claims of indexing, vague titles (such as *International Journal of Applied Sciences and Engineering*), fraudulent publication fees and dubious-looking websites. By contrast, modern predatory journals use more specific titles and release well-designed issues. They have real indexing and well-developed websites. They are owned by supposedly legitimate organizations, publish for free (because they have other interests), run counterfeit archives and safeguard themselves with plagiarism checks (see F. H. Kakamad *et al. Int. J. Surg. Open* **17**, 5–7; 2019).

However, the skipping or faking of scientific review remain cornerstones for predatory journals and publishers. In our opinion, it is dangerous to exclude the criterion of inadequate peer review from any definition of predatory journals, as Grudniewicz and colleagues propose, because that definition would then fail to catch its criminal targets.

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Predatory journals: tell-tale lax review

Agnes Grudniewicz and colleagues argue for a definition of a predatory journal that will protect scholarship (*Nature* **576**, 210–212; 2019). Their proposed definition excludes an important feature of predatory journals — poor-quality peer review — on the grounds that such reviews are not accessible for analysis. It is a sad irony that this lack of transparency — a tell-tale trait of predatory journals — should be used to justify omitting an assessment of peer-review quality.

If misuse of the peer-review label is not included in the definition of predatory journals, it could strengthen rather than weaken them. Formal listings of those journals might shrink under such a definition: many journals would be removed because their questionable peer-review procedures have escaped scrutiny and they seem otherwise respectable. They could then become attractive outlets to potential authors.

As Grudniewicz and colleagues point out, legitimate journals that keep their peer-review processes under wraps encourage predatory practices. If publication of signed referees' comments were standard, journals publishing unrefereed papers would quickly be exposed. In our view, therefore, open peer review should be compulsory and the definition of predatory journals should include the quality of peer review.

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Röntgen, Becquerel and radiation

Last month marked the 175th anniversary of the birth of German physicist Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen (1845–1923), who won the 1901 Nobel prize for his discovery of X-rays. His work is still a linchpin of modern science and medicine.

Röntgen's academic career had a less-than-propitious start. Wrongly accused of being the author of a caricature of his class teacher, he was expelled from high school in the Netherlands without graduating. His application to Utrecht University in the Netherlands was rejected as a result, but he went on to study mechanical engineering at the Federal Polytechnical School (now the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology) in Zurich. He was then rejected by Julius Maximilian University of Würzburg in Germany for a postdoctoral qualification, which he eventually secured at the University of Strasbourg, France.

Despite this rejection, Röntgen later donated his Nobel Prize money to the University of Würzburg. In another example of his philanthropy, he declined to patent his X-ray discovery, thereby making it available to the world. He also turned down the honour of a noble title.

In 1903, French engineer Henri Becquerel was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics, along with Marie and Pierre Curie (see also *Nature* **579**, 490–491; 2020), for their pioneering work on radioactivity. Becquerel was inspired by Röntgen's X-rays, which gave him insight into other forms of radiation, such as phosphorescence (see *Nature* **78**, 414–416; 1908).

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