

# Dear Doctor



**David Westgarth**

Editor, BDJ in Practice

When I was younger and my strong, northern twang was far more prevalent than it is now, telling anyone my surname required a slow repetition of each letter, seeing as basically anyone and everyone would get it wrong. Mr Westgate, Mr Westguard, and my personal favourite, Mr Westdath. There has been a brief reappearance of such tomfoolery throughout the pandemic, in large due to mask muffle. Getting a name wrong is one of my pet hates. Perhaps that's the journalist in me. It's not difficult – just ask the person how to spell or pronounce it!

Besides my surname, nowhere will you find me listed as a doctor. That has everything to do with the fact I'm not a doctor, but yet there are still a number of prospective authors who begin their emails with 'Dear Dr Westgarth'. Why? Why the assumption? And yet, none of these annoy me – or concern me – as much as the growing trend in the world of publishing.

When *BDJ In Practice* is published, I can bet the house that within a week of the articles going live online, I'll receive an email addressed to either 'Dr Permissions' or 'Dr Westgarth'. Greetings, the email continues, from a conference planner inviting me to speak on my esteemed research in an exotic and far flung corner of the globe, or from a journal inviting me to submit my

research – apparently free of the constraints of plagiarism – to their also esteemed intellectual property. But what these wonderful opportunities fail to tell you is the cost involved – to you, not them – because of their also esteemed reputation. One such email I received even signed off 'Lend your hand become remarkable to our conference.' Seems legit.

I would hope that less experienced authors would see through this and proceed to filing the email under B, but that is not always the case, and is a dangerous assumption to make. It is a point the British Dental Editors and Writers Forum (BDEWF), chaired by Professor Kenneth Eaton, have grown more concerned about as the months go by.

Is it a big deal, you might ask? Well, yes, it is. Were these approaches genuine, they would have noted relatively quickly my article on 'Are we finally winning the war on unhealthy foods?' isn't quite suitable for a conference on chemical innovations that will change the modern world current trends, education and future research opportunities. Just a thought. This predatory model will inevitably mean there are victims. Reputations can be damaged, bank balances affected, and inconveniences caused. I implore you to read Peter Heasman's magnificent piece entitled 'Unravelling the mysteries of predatory conferences.'<sup>1</sup> In the piece, Heasman wrote:

'Especially vulnerable of course, are those who are at their early career stage and who may not readily distinguish these events from the established conferences organised, for example (in the UK) by the royal

colleges, British Dental Association, research associations and specialist societies.'<sup>1</sup>

It is for precisely this reason events such as the BDEWF's Workshop for New Authors and Peer Reviewers, co-chaired by Professor Eaton and Dr Stephen Hancocks, Editor-in-Chief of the *BDJ*, are of increasing importance. I am also the editor of *BDJ Student*, and thus know how keen new and prospective authors are to write and to get their work published. That enthusiasm will take them far, but it may well also take them into the hands of these predatory journals and conferences for the simple reason that they are unaware of them – you don't know what you don't know. I have lost count of the number of occasions where I've had to pull an article as we're going to print because the authors were unaware they couldn't submit their work to another journal in the same form. I've lost count of the times I've had to explain that once published, they cannot send it to another journal in the portfolio. The world of publishing isn't easy, and there are landmines to dodge, and to do that you need the right guide. Just don't expect it to be Dr Permissions.

For further information about the British Dental Editors and Writers Forum, including the criteria for entering the annual BDIA/BDEWF New Communicators Awards, visit [www.bdewf.org.uk/](http://www.bdewf.org.uk/) ♦

## Reference

1. Heasman P A. Unravelling the mysteries of predatory conferences. *Br Dent J* 2019; **226**: 228-230.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41404-022-1063-x>