Unfortunately, the open access movement has led to the rise of several predatory journal publishers. Sometimes it can be difficult to tell the good from the bad, but the following are clues that the publisher may be from the dark side:

1. There are several grammatical or spelling errors on the website or in the articles.
2. There isn’t a regular publication schedule (i.e. should be published 4 times a year, but the last issue was published in spring 2001)
3. Covers all disciplines and has no clear focus
4. It is difficult to tell where the journal is published
5. Boasts a GJIS impact score (this score is fee-based, not research-based)
6. No one has ever heard of this journal and it is difficult to find in any library in the United States
7. The editorial board members are the most frequent authors in the journal
8. The journal publishes articles from the same small group of authors (no diversity)
9. It is not indexed or is only indexed in a few places
10. You received an unsolicited invitation to publish
11. The title is very similar to a reputable journal
12. Articles are plagiarized
13. There is a rapid turn around for the peer review process
14. The publisher guarantees your article will be published if you pay a fee

Several reputable journals are published online or require an author fee so the information can be provided freely to the public. This doesn’t necessarily mean that the publication is from the dark side. Here are a few clues that a publisher may be from the light side:

1. The journal is well edited and free from grammatical or spelling errors. The website is well organized and doesn’t include ads for other products.
2. Published on a regular schedule
3. Clearly defined topic and focus
4. It is easy to tell where the journal is published and who is responsible for the publication
5. Your colleagues have heard of the journal, and other scholars in the field have cited articles from it
6. The journal is held by several libraries in the United States
7. There is diversity among the authors and the topics covered
8. It is indexed in several databases
9. You contacted the publisher, rather than receiving an unsolicited invitation to publish
10. The publisher allows time for a full peer review process to take place. There is not a rush to publish articles.
11. There is no guarantee that your article will be published if it does not meet the quality and topic standards for the journal

*Adapted by Megan Beard from Jeffrey Beall’s criteria for predatory publishers [http://scholarlyoa.com/]