



# Navigating Scientific Publishing in the Nature Portfolio

**George Inglis, PhD**

Senior Editor, *Communications Biology*

February 20, 2024

**SPRINGER NATURE**

**SPRINGER NATURE**

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# Presentation Outline

- 1 Who are editors?
- 2 Introduction to the Nature Portfolio
- 3 Overview of the Publishing Process
- 4 Summary & Questions

# Who are editors?

# 1.0

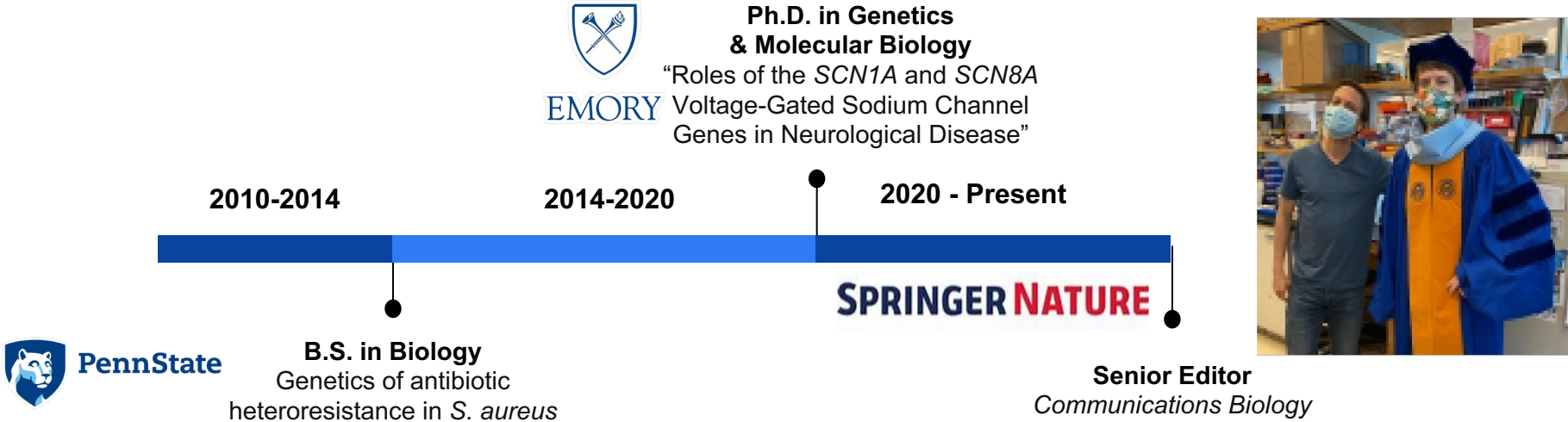
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# Profile of an Editor

- PhD-level scientist with an understanding of the publication process—as an author and reviewer
  - Ability to critically evaluate papers
  - Strong communication skills
- Understands the major challenges in their field and the current issues in publishing
- Broad interest across scientific disciplines
  - Motivated to help authors publish and communicate high-quality, robust science



# Path to Becoming an Editor



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# What do Professional Editors Do?



## 1. Manuscript handling:

- Choose which papers to publish, based on the priorities of the journal and feedback from reviewers
- Act as liaison between authors and reviewers

## 2. Keeping on top of the field:

- Learn about the latest science by reading papers, attending conferences, going to research institutions

## 3-4. Special projects & Other tasks:

- Commission content: reviews, commentary, etc.
  - Organize Calls for Papers
- Organize conferences and other events
- Help promote/amplify published papers
- Handle correspondence related to published papers and publish corrections

# 3-4. Special Projects & Other Tasks

## Developing Press Releases

### Guinness yeasts are genetically unique among Irish beers

The Guinness brewery has kept a record of the yeast strains it has used going back to 1903 – a genetic analysis shows these are distinct from those used to brew other Irish beers

By Chen Ly

12 January 2024

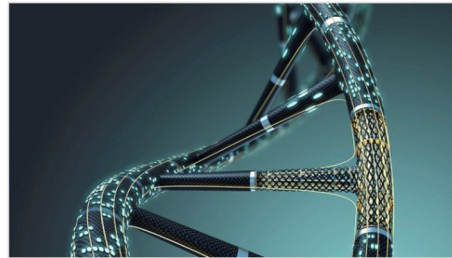


Some yeasts currently used to brew Guinness are descendants of those used in 1903  
Art: WISAKRUP

**NewScientist**

## Developing Collections

Collection | 10 July 2023



### Artificial intelligence in genomics

This Collection encourages submissions that showcase how artificial intelligence can be used to improve our understanding of the genetic basis for complex traits or diseases.

Image: © [M] iaremenko / stock.adobe.com

Open for submissions

## Q&As with Researchers

Q&A

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s42003-023-04947-3>

OPEN

Check for updates

Advocating for data sharing in human genomics: an interview with Chris Wallace and Guillermo Reales



Credit: Guillermo Reales. Pictured from left to right: Guillermo Reales and Chris Wallace

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# What Professional Editors Don't Do



## Evaluate the technical details of a manuscript

- For the most part, editors look at the relative advance compared to the literature.
- Specific technical details are evaluated by peer reviewers.

## Count referee “votes”

- Editors consider each comment, the expertise of the reviewers, and whether the concerns could be reasonably addressed in a revision.

## Accept papers because they are about a “hot” topic, “impactful”, or from a prominent author

- Editors evaluate each paper based on its relative contribution over previous literature.
- Just because something is flashy doesn't make it good science.
- Even great/famous researchers occasionally produce duds!



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# Science Editing vs. Science Writing

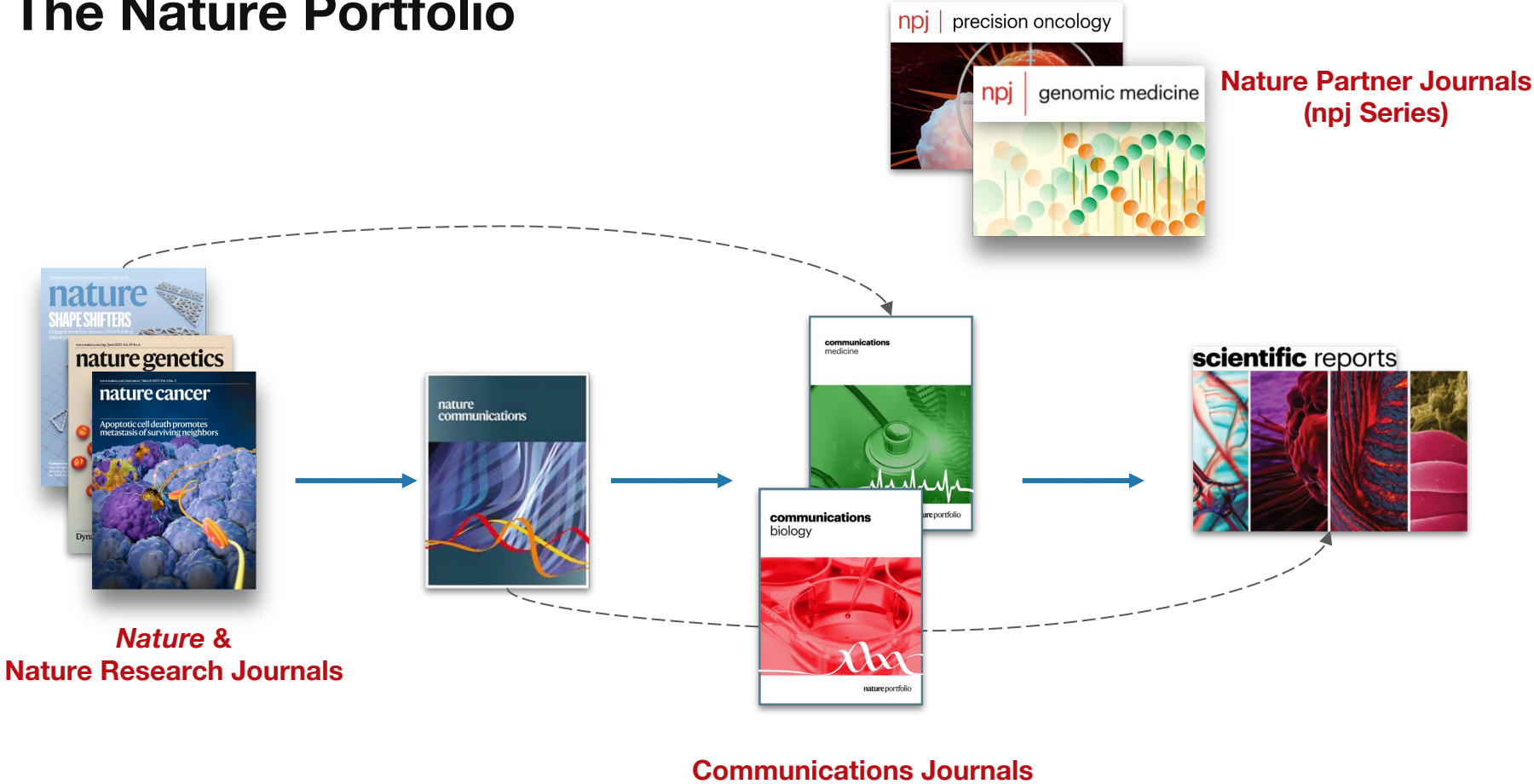
Science Editing	Science Writing
More reading than writing	Writing is (literally) the job
Mostly technical audience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Literature reviews</li><li>• Manuscript assessments</li><li>• Research highlights</li><li>• Press pitches</li></ul>	Popular <i>or</i> technical audience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• News stories</li><li>• Pharmaceutical product descriptions</li><li>• Etc.</li></ul>
Focus on the data in a manuscript	Focus on the story behind a manuscript



# Introduction to the Nature Portfolio

# 2.0

# The Nature Portfolio



# The Nature Portfolio



**Widest importance and implications.**

Significance should be obvious to any scientist working in any field of research.

**Most relevant advances in a field.**

Significance should be apparent to anyone in that discipline.

**Highly significant advances that influence a field.**

Broad appeal isn't a prerequisite for publication... but great science is.

**Important insights into *focused* areas of research.**

New open access options reporting high-quality findings.

**Technically sound, quality science.**

Significance is less important than sound science.

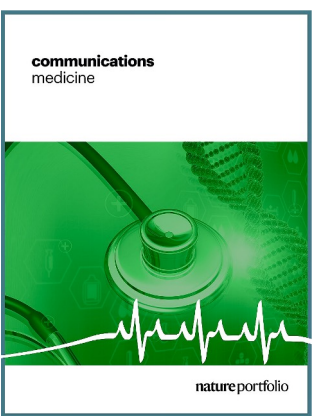
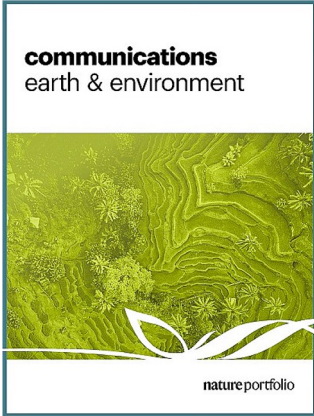
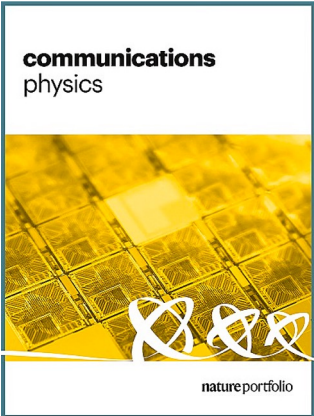
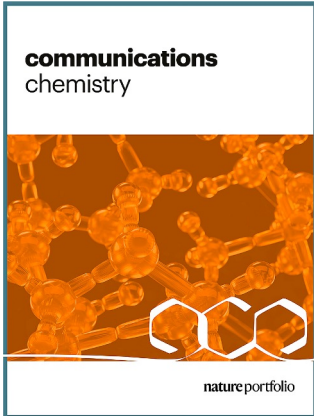


Open Access



Transformative Journal

# Communications Journals



# Communications Biology

- An **open access** journal for all biologists
- Nature Portfolio publishing option for more **specialized** or **interdisciplinary** topics
- Less stringent criteria for **impact** than *Nature Communications* or the Nature-branded journals.
- Manuscripts make **important and novel advances** to others working in the same area of research



communications biology

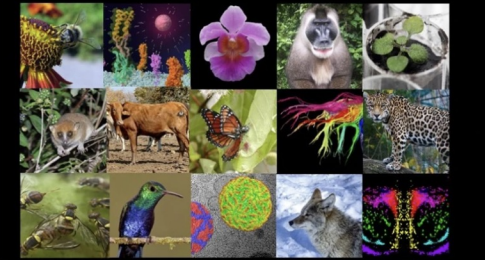
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[nature](#) > [communications biology](#)

## Five years of Communications Biology!



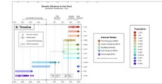
### Featured

Article  
Open Access  
19 Jan 2023

#### **Plagued by a cryptic clock: insight and issues from the global phylogeny of *Yersinia pestis***

The emergence of the plague pathogen throughout history is investigated using molecular clock modelling and phylogenetic analyses.

Katherine Eaton, Leo Faatherstone ... Hendrik N. Poinar

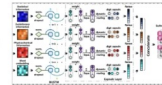


Article  
Open Access  
19 Jan 2023

#### **Learning the protein language of proteome-wide protein-protein binding sites via explainable ensemble deep learning**

An ensemble deep learning model (EDLM)-based protein-protein interaction (PPI) site identification method (EDLMPPi) accurately predicts PPIs through protein language models and outperforms state-of-the-art methods on multiple benchmark sets.

Zilong Hou, Yuning Yang ... Xiangtao Li



Article  
Open Access  
17 Jan 2023

#### **Deep reptilian evolutionary roots of a major avian respiratory adaptation**

A newly discovered osteological correlate for structures associated with ventilatory muscle attachment indicates a deep evolutionary history of respiratory innovation within Archosauria.

Yan-yin Wang, Leon P. A. M. Claessens & Corwin Sullivan

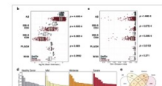


Article  
Open Access  
20 Jan 2023

#### **Machine learning identifies T cell receptor repertoire signatures associated with COVID-19 severity**

Signatures associated with COVID-19 disease severity are studied, primarily using machine learning models for classification on the basis of TCR repertoire analysis and combining such data analysis with single cell transcriptomic data.

Jonathan J. Park, Kyoung A V. Lee ... Sidi Chen



nature portfolio

# Communications Biology at NTU

## Phenome-wide analysis of Taiwan Biobank reveals novel glycemia-related loci and genetic risks for diabetes

[Chia-Jung Lee](#), [Ting-Huei Chen](#), [Aylwin Ming Wee Lim](#), [Chien-Ching Chang](#), [Jia-Jyun Sie](#), [Pei-Lung Chen](#), [Su-Wei Chang](#), [Shang-Jung Wu](#), [Chia-Lin Hsu](#), [Ai-Ru Hsieh](#) [✉](#), [Wei-Shiung Yang](#) [✉](#) & [Cathy S. J. Fann](#) [✉](#)

*Communications Biology* 5, Article number: 1175 (2022) | [Cite this article](#)

Article | [Open access](#) | Published: 18 October 2021

## Connecting MHC-I-binding motifs with HLA alleles via deep learning

[Ko-Han Lee](#), [Yu-Chuan Chang](#), [Ting-Fu Chen](#), [Hsueh-Fen Juan](#), [Huai-Kuang Tsai](#) & [Chien-Yu Chen](#) [✉](#)

*Communications Biology* 4, Article number: 1194 (2021) | [Cite this article](#)

Article | [Open access](#) | Published: 15 June 2023

## Ectopic ATP synthase stimulates the secretion of extracellular vesicles in cancer cells

[Yi-Chun Kao](#), [Yi-Wen Chang](#), [Charles P. Lai](#), [Nai-Wen Chang](#), [Chen-Hao Huang](#), [Chien-Sheng Chen](#), [Hsuan-Cheng Huang](#) [✉](#) & [Hsueh-Fen Juan](#) [✉](#)

*Communications Biology* 6, Article number: 642 (2023) | [Cite this article](#)



Article | [Open access](#) | Published: 22 June 2023

## The effect of inhibition of receptor tyrosine kinase AXL on DNA damage response in ovarian cancer

[Xun Hui Yeo](#), [Vignesh Sundararajan](#), [Zhengwei Wu](#), [Zi Jin Cheryl Phua](#), [Yin Ying Ho](#), [Kai Lay Esther Peh](#), [Yi-Chia Chiu](#), [Tuan Zea Tan](#), [Dennis Kappei](#), [Ying Swan Ho](#), [David Shao Peng Tan](#), [Wai Leong Tam](#) & [Ruby Yun-Ju Huang](#) [✉](#)

*Communications Biology* 6, Article number: 660 (2023) | [Cite this article](#)

Article | [Open access](#) | Published: 09 September 2021

## Differential whole-genome doubling and homologous recombination deficiencies across breast cancer subtypes from the Taiwanese population

[Chia-Hsin Wu](#), [Chia-Shan Hsieh](#), [Yo-Cheng Chang](#), [Chi-Cheng Huang](#), [Hsien-Tang Yeh](#), [Ming-Feng Hou](#), [Yuan-Chiang Chung](#), [Shih-Hsin Tu](#), [King-Jen Chang](#), [Amrita Chattopadhyay](#), [Liang-Chuan Lai](#), [Tzu-Pin Lu](#), [Yung-Hua Li](#), [Mong-Hsun Tsai](#) [✉](#) & [Eric Y. Chuang](#) [✉](#)

*Communications Biology* 4, Article number: 1052 (2021) | [Cite this article](#)

# Editorial Team: *Communications Biology*



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**Christina Karlsson-Rosenthal**  
Chief Editor (London)  
*Cell & molecular biology, cancer*



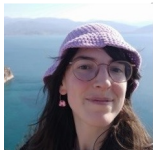
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Associate Editor (NYC)  
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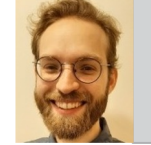


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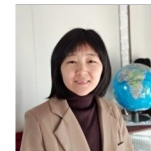


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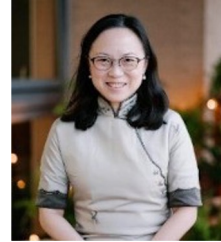
# Collaborative editorial model

## Editorial Board Members are active researchers recognized as experts in their field

- Our Editorial Board Members work closely with the in-house editors to ensure that all manuscripts are subject to the same editorial standards and journal policies.
- They handle manuscripts within their areas of expertise, overseeing all aspects of the peer review process from submission to acceptance.
- Advise on journal policy and priorities, including collections

Interested in joining the *Communications Biology* editorial board? Let us know!

Learn more: <https://www.nature.com/commsbio/editorial-board>



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National Taiwan University

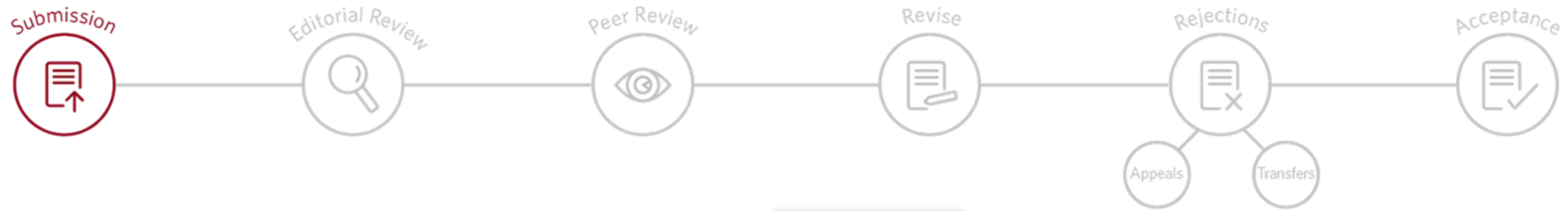


Chien-Yu Chen  
National Taiwan University

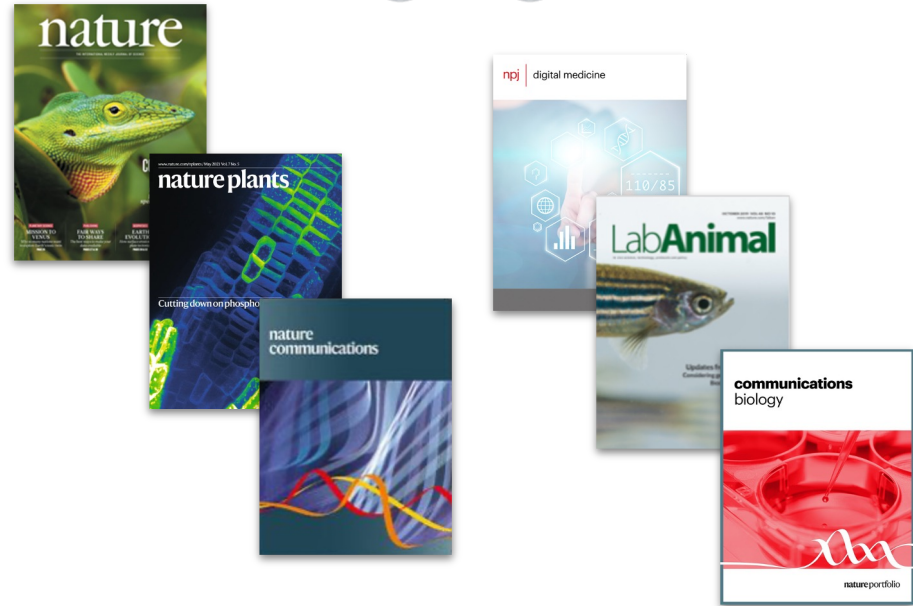
# Overview of the Publishing Process

# 3.0

# Finding the best fit



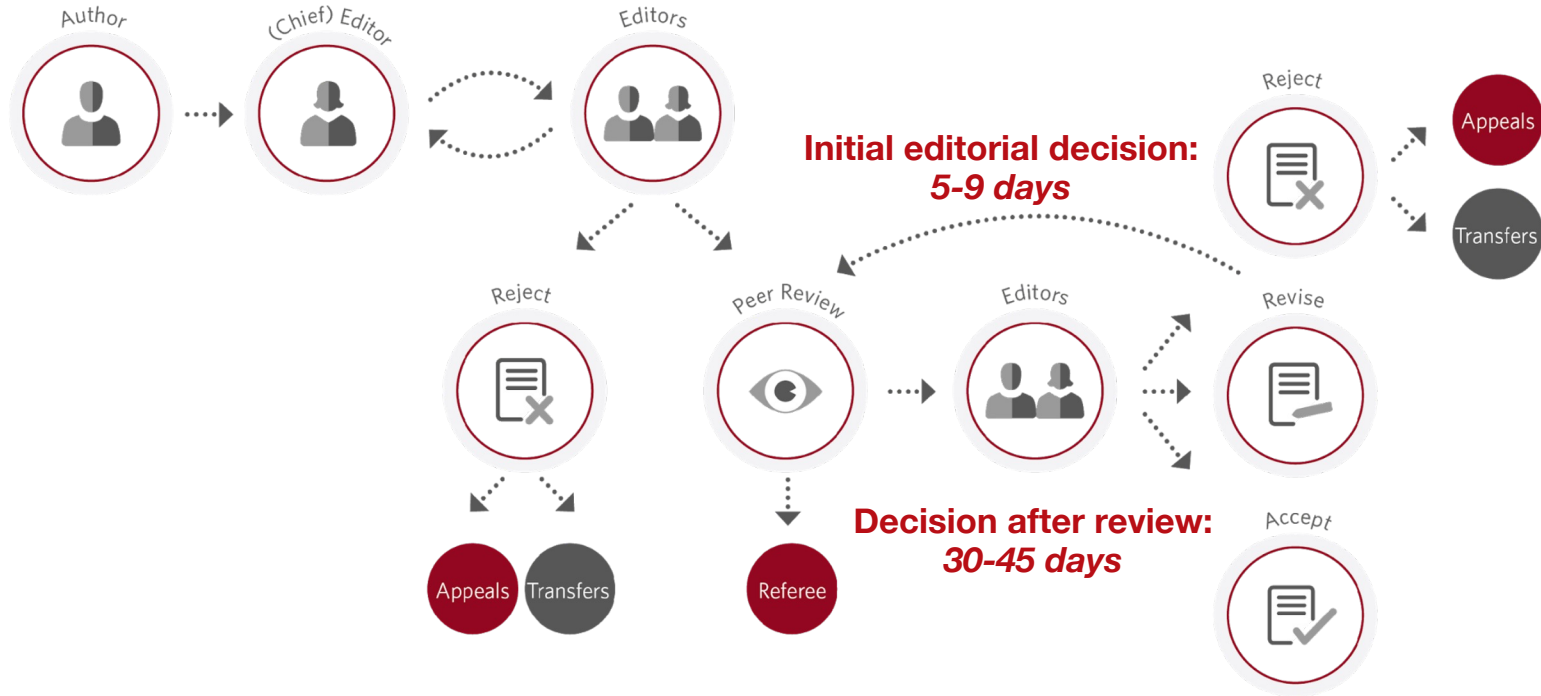
- **How ‘big’** is your story?
- **What audience** do you want to reach?
- Is **open access** important to you?
- **How fast** do you want to get it out?



**Tip:** If you are curious about whether your paper is within a journal’s scope, you can always email an editor for clarification



# The Editorial Process



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# Initial editorial evaluation at Nature Portfolio journals



## Your editor will guide you through the editorial process

- The editor **reads the full manuscript** to determine whether it is potentially suitable for the journal.
- **The editor decides** whether to send the paper to peer review, in consultation with other editors on the team.
- **Timeliness is a priority**: we aim for initial decisions within a week.



# Initial editorial evaluation at Nature Portfolio journals

Submission



Editorial Review



Peer Review



Revise



Rejections



Acceptance



Appeals

Transfers

## Cover letters are important

### Editorial

#### How to make cover letters instructive

**Strictly convey the paper's context, emphasis, implications and limitations.**

**T**he role of the cover letter may not be as obvious as it seems. It is not merely a formality, but a crucial tool for conveying the paper's context, emphasis, implications and limitations. It is a chance to highlight the paper's contribution to the field and to address any potential concerns or questions that may arise during the review process.



An example of a cover letter for the journal Nature, page 47.

The cover letter for the journal Nature is an important and often overlooked part of the submission process. It is a chance to highlight the paper's contribution to the field and to address any potential concerns or questions that may arise during the review process. The cover letter should be written in a clear and concise manner, and should be tailored to the specific journal and its audience.

naturebiomedicalscience

Volume 4 | October 2022 | 1001-1008 | 1007

### Editorial

#### Dos and don'ts in a cover letter

**How to write an effective cover letter.**

**W**riting an effective cover letter is a skill that is often overlooked. It is a chance to highlight the paper's contribution to the field and to address any potential concerns or questions that may arise during the review process. The cover letter should be written in a clear and concise manner, and should be tailored to the specific journal and its audience.

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nature computational science

Volume 10 | October 2022 | 1001-1008 | 1007

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**Check for updates**

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nature computational science

Volume 10 | October 2022 | 1001-1008 | 1007

### Editorial

#### What's in your cover letter?

**What are the dos and don'ts of cover letters, and how can authors make their cover letters more effective?**

**A** cover letter is a crucial part of the submission process. It is a chance to highlight the paper's contribution to the field and to address any potential concerns or questions that may arise during the review process. The cover letter should be written in a clear and concise manner, and should be tailored to the specific journal and its audience.

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nature cancer

Volume 4 | April 2022 | 437-438 | 437

**Check for updates**

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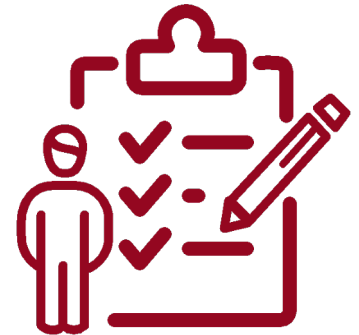
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# Initial editorial evaluation at Nature Portfolio journals

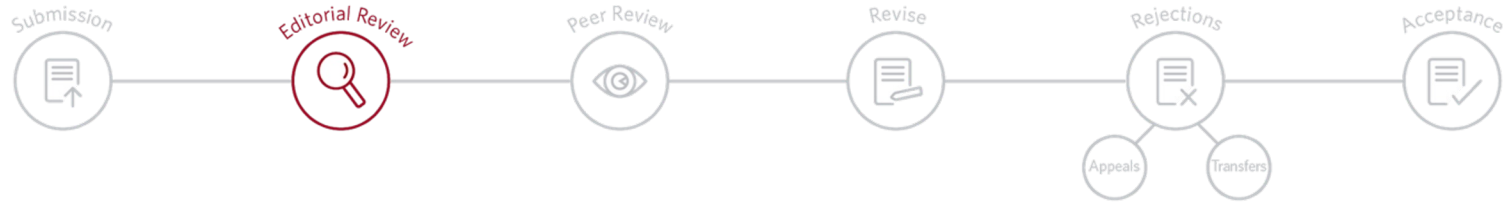


## Cover letters are important

- Explain **why your research is important**.
- Clearly state **the advance** of your research over previous work. Be specific!
- Be direct and succinct (**bullet points are encouraged**)
- If a similar paper has been published **tell us what's new**.
- You can **suggest or exclude reviewers**
- **Avoid restating the Abstract or Introduction**



# What papers do we send out to peer review?



## Criteria

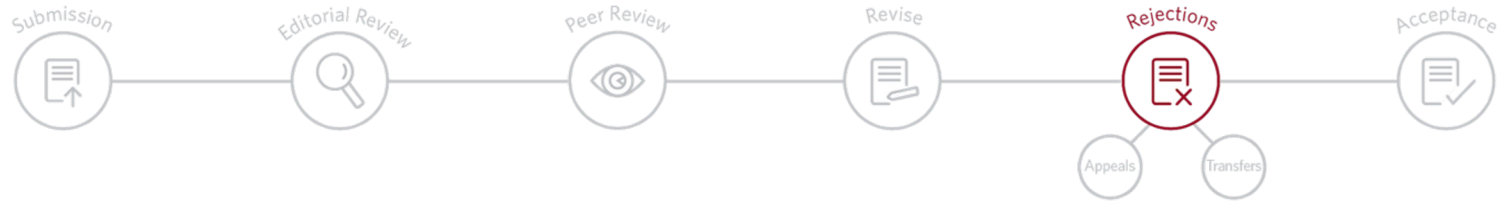
- (1) Relevance to the journal's readership
- (2) Significance of the findings
- (3) Strong support for conclusions

## A strong contender for review...

- (1) Addresses an important question for the field or provides a useful technical advance
- (2) Tells us something **new** and interesting
- (3) Presents strong, well-controlled data
- (4) Rules out alternative explanations to arrive at definitive conclusions
- (5) Includes benchmarking for new methods



# Reasons for rejecting without peer review



- **Topic is out of the journal's scope**
- **Similar findings have been published or recently accepted**
- Key conclusions lack direct experimental support
- Essential criteria specific for the journal or field are missing
- There are serious ethical concerns



# Peer Review



## A good peer reviewer has:

- Technical expertise and knowledge of the field
- A fair and constructive attitude
- No conflicts of interest
- Good attention to detail
- A big picture view
- Familiarity with journal standards

## Our editors:

- Seek to increase diversity in the reviewer pool
- Honour author exclusions (within reason)
- Involve as many reviewers as needed (three is standard)
- Are alert to inappropriate reviewer behaviour



# Recognizing reviewers

Each month, *Communications Biology* chooses one of our outstanding reviewers to feature as **Reviewer of the Month**

We select reviewers who have:

- made a significant and positive contribution to the peer review process, regardless of whether the paper was eventually accepted by the journal;
- taken both a broad and detailed view of the paper;
- demonstrated professionalism and compassion in their reviews; and
- provided comments that truly help the authors to improve their work.



**February 2024**  
Lidewij Schipper



**January 2024**  
Suvi Sallinen



**December 2023**  
Isaac G-Santoyo



We also offer ORCID recognition for all peer reviewers, including trainees

# Reviewer assessment



**Editors can (and do) overrule referee requests when appropriate**

## Reviewers evaluate:

- Strength of support for the conclusions
- Data quality
- Experimental design and/or theoretical framework
- Methodological details

## Reviewers advise on:

- Extent of the scientific advance
- Interest to the field
- Potential impact on future research
- Overlap with previous work

# How our decisions are made



## Editors, not reviewers, take the ultimate responsibility for decisions

- **We don't count votes**; we consider arguments
- We **make our own decisions** and do overrule reviewers, both positive and negative
- We **use our judgment** on which of the reviewer requests are feasible
- We uphold **rigorous standards** for review



# When you are invited to revise



- We believe any major issues can be resolved within six months
- We try to minimize the number of rounds of review
- You should aim to address the major issues, particularly those emphasized by the editor
- **The goal of peer review is to improve papers**
- **When in doubt, consult with your editor**
- We can provide guidance, resolve disputes, and overrule any unreasonable reviewer requests



# Addressing the referee reports



## Make the most of your opportunity to revise

- **Engage thoroughly** with the reviews
- If revision takes longer than the “deadline”, it is OK! Just **inform the editor**.

## Provide a point-by-point response

- Make your answers distinct from the reviewer comments
  - **Reviewer’s comment**
  - **Author’s response**
- Clearly indicate **where you have made the changes** within the manuscript.

## An effective point-by-point response

- Views the critiques as an opportunity for improvements
- Explains why specific points have not been addressed
- Is professional and diplomatic

# Addressing the referee reports



*We are grateful to all reviewers for their helpful comments and have improved the manuscript according to the suggestions. We have listed the original comments from the Reviewers in **bold**, and our responses in *red*.*

**Reviewer 1, Point #1:** The authors should acknowledge limitation X in their manuscript.

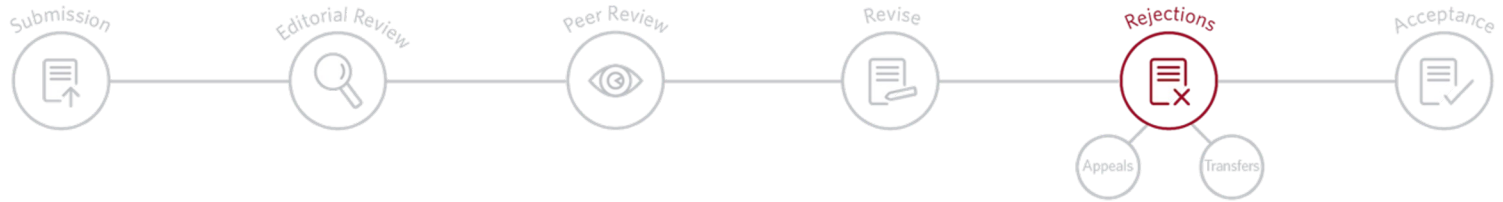
Thank you for raising this important point, we have updated the Discussion with the following text (Line 606).

*“One weakness of our approach is X...”*



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# Reasons for rejecting after peer review

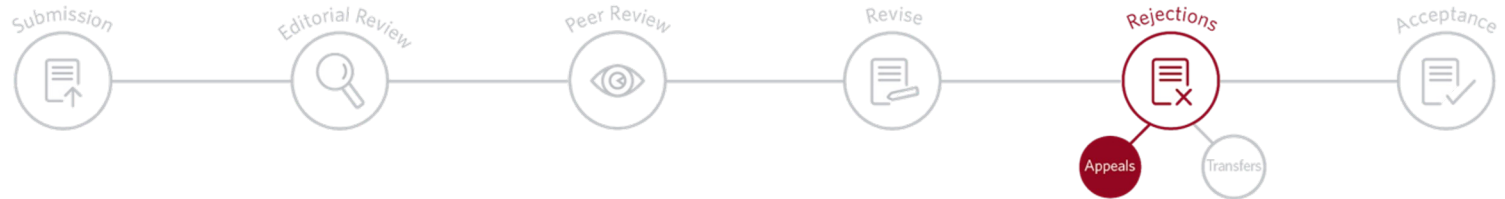


- The conclusions are **not sufficiently supported**
- There are significant **technical concerns**
- The interpretation is **ambiguous or flawed**
- The findings are **not sufficiently novel**
- The paper lacks a **critical element or control**



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# Appeals



**We consider appeals in cases where the concerns can be resolved**

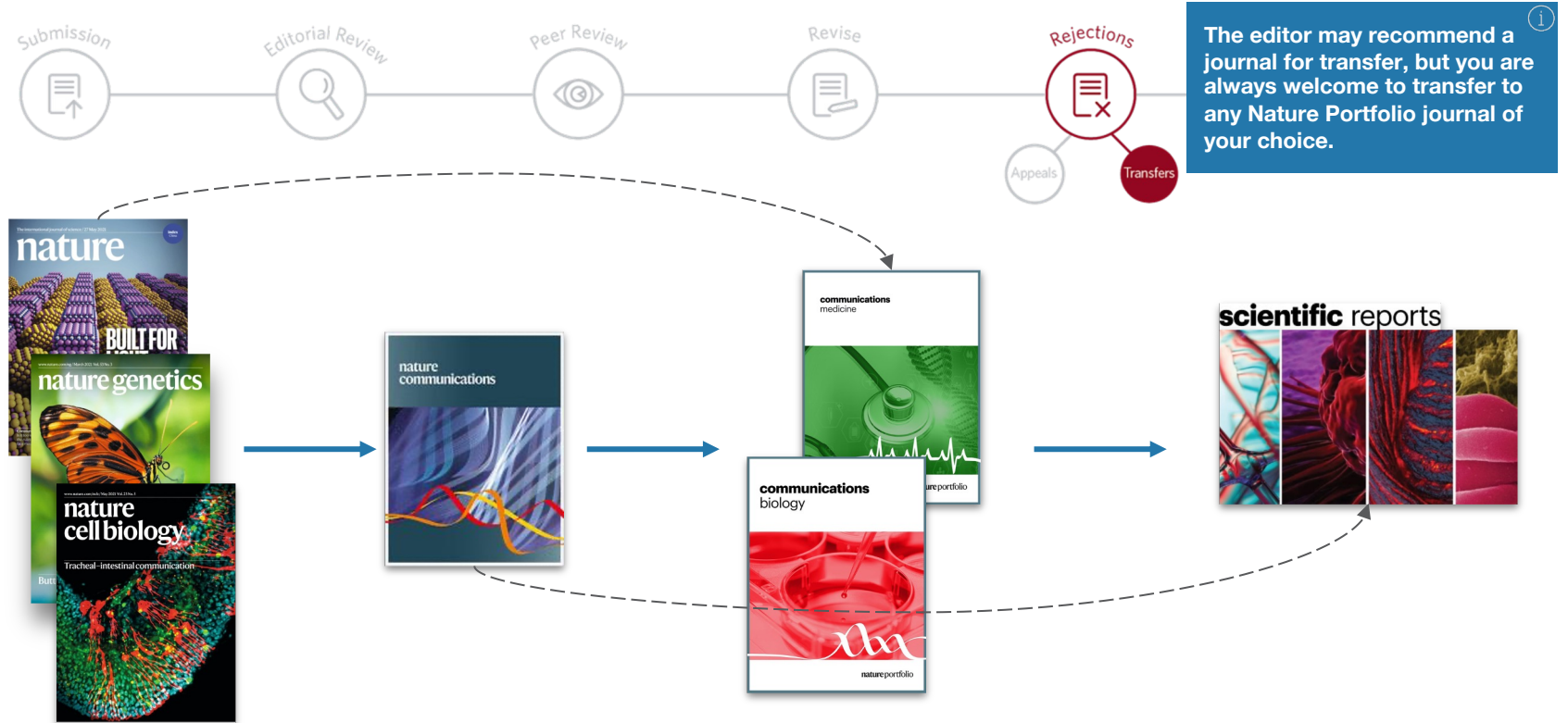
## Reasons to appeal

- ✓ You have **additional data** that have been identified as essential for the study
- ✓ There were **factual errors** in the reviews or the editor's comments
- ✓ You have **specific, concrete evidence** of reviewer bias

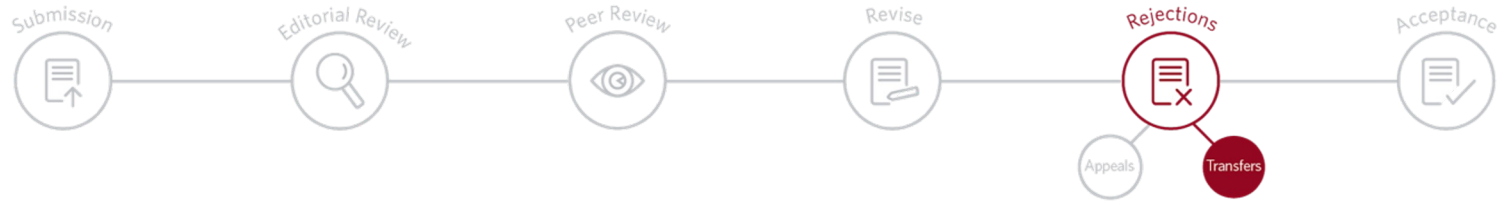
## When appealing is not the best choice

- ✗ When there are **subjective disagreements** on novelty or significance
  - *"The Referees are biased! I self-cite because I have published seminal papers in this field."*
  - *"We worked really hard on this paper!"*
  - *"You're not qualified to make this decision!"*

# Transfers within the Nature Portfolio



# Portable peer review



## We can transfer reviews to journals outside of Springer Nature

- Portable peer review saves authors time
- It saves reviewers time
- Reviewer identities can be shared if reviewers give permission



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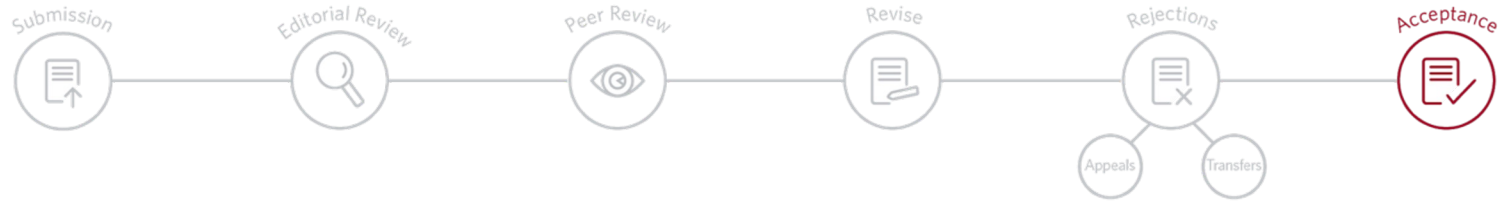
# Key takeaways about the editorial process

- Make your **main message (why research is important and new)** clear in the cover letter and paper.
- Your **handling editor will guide you** through the editorial process.
- We look for **papers with potential**.
- The goal of peer review is to **improve papers**.
- Make the **most of your opportunity** to revise.
- Editors, not referees, **take the ultimate responsibility** for decisions.
- We consider appeals in cases where the **concerns can be resolved**.



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# Giving your work the care and attention it deserves



## Ways we help to enhance the paper:

- Editors ensure that papers meet requirements for transparency and reproducibility
- Copyediting and typesetting improve the final product
- Publishers are responsible for maintaining the version of record in perpetuity, issuing corrections as needed, and providing information to indexing and abstracting services.

## Ways we promote your publication:

- Publishing on a prominent platform
- Enabling findability
- Press releases
- Social media promotion
- Research highlights
- Author interviews
- Inclusion in special collections

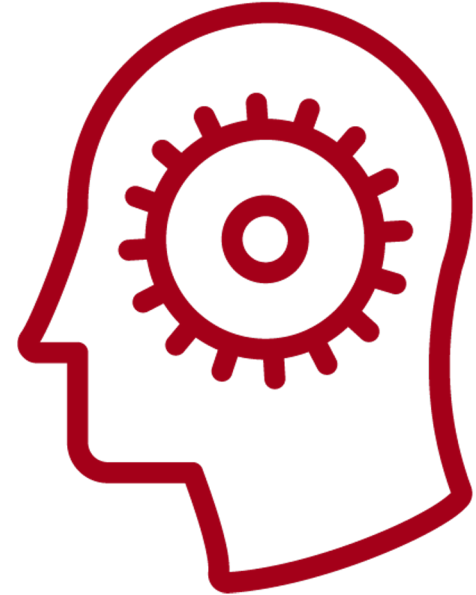
# In case you were wondering...



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# Artificial Intelligence in the Nature Portfolio

- Large Language Models (LLMs) **cannot be listed as authors**
  - Use of tools like ChatGPT should be documented in the **Methods** and/or **Acknowledgments**
- However, we discourage the use of LLMs in peer review
  - When relevant, LLM usage should be declared in the comments to editors
- Generative AI tools also **cannot be used to create figures or videos**
  - Rare exceptions on a case-by-case basis (ex. if a piece is explicitly about AI)



Given the rapid development of this field, these policies are subject to change in the future:

<https://www.nature.com/nature-portfolio/editorial-policies/ai>



# Summary & Questions

# 4.0

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# In case you missed it...

## Role of sleep deprivation in immune-related disease risk and outcomes

Sergio Garbarino, Paola Lanteri ... Egeria Scoditti  
Review Article | 18 November 2021



- Editors **are there to help you** navigate the publication process.
- You deserve the best service possible, so **contact the editor if you have any questions!**

# Thank you!



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