THIS WEEK

EDITORIALS

WORLD VIEW Rethink ethics review in the era of big data **p.277**

FULL MEASURE Fresh approach samples beer without destroying the brew **p.279**

SPACE AGE Astronaut twins once again identical after space effects dwindle **p.280**

Grateful acknowledgement

A three-year trial shows that most researchers want the work of peer reviewers to be recognized. Around 3,700 Nature *referees have chosen to be publicly acknowledged.*

Peer review is central to the quality and integrity of research. Peer review is also hard, time-consuming and often, it seems, thankless.

Nature research journals want to offer more recognition for reviewers' valuable contributions and to introduce more transparency into the process. So in 2016, *Nature* launched a referee-recognition trial. Once a paper has been reviewed and accepted, authors are given the option of thanking the referees for their contribution in the paper, with the reviewers' consent. Reviewers who give permission can also have their names included, if the authors agree.

Nearly three years on, it's time to take stock. So far, 91% of *Nature* authors and 55% of reviewers have opted in to this trial (26% of reviewers opted out and 19% of reviewers did not respond.) Around 3,700 *Nature* referees have chosen to be publicly recognized, and around 80% of *Nature* papers have at least one referee named.

Our analysis suggests that there was no major difference in take-up between researchers in the life sciences and the physical sciences, or between male and female authors and referees. A similar proportion of referees from early, middle and late career stages were happy to be named.

On the basis of this positive response, 16 Nature Reviews journals rolled out the referee-recognition trial in September 2017. Of the reviewers on these journals, 57% have so far opted to be named. Since January 2019, seven Nature Research journals (*Nature Astronomy*, *Nature Climate Change*, *Nature Nanotechnology*, *Nature Neuroscience*, *Nature Physics*, *Nature Plants* and *Nature Protocols*) have also offered referee recognition. All this builds on other moves to open up the peer-review process. The BMC journals have been pioneers, publishing reviewer names in their medical journals since 1999. *Nature Communications* has been publishing anonymous referee reports for more than three years, and in November 2018 also began to offer referee recognition.

Not everyone supports the naming of referees on published papers. The reviewers who chose not to take part in *Nature*'s referee-recognition trial, and a separate survey of reviewers from 2017, highlighted several concerns. Some said that it might increase the risk of the system being gamed — perhaps starting a 'you owe me' chain — or of referees softening their reports, maybe for fear of causing offence or of retaliation from someone in a senior position. Many of these researchers believe that peer review should always be wholly confidential. Because there is not universal acceptance at the moment, referee recognition remains optional on the Nature-branded journals. And clearly there is more work to be done to recognize the equally important work of people who review papers that are then rejected, and the many colleagues — often more-junior team members — who help the main referees.

To see so many referees choosing to be named is a reflection of the changing attitudes towards peer review. We're pleased to be able to publicly acknowledge the contributions of so many of our referees and to hear the community's views. We hope to offer referee recognition on more journals in future, and look forward to further improving and evolving the peer-review process. ■

All in good time

Researchers must be given the time needed to work respectfully with marginalized groups.

Today, sequencing technologies can read the six billion letters of a person's genome in as little as an hour. Genome scientists know, of course, that analysing the data — and making inferences about health risks or ancestry — takes much longer. But for those collaborating with Indigenous people and other marginalized groups, the crucial work starts long before the first cheek swab or blood sample is taken, and must continue long after the last letter of DNA has been sequenced and interpreted.

For generations, many scientists have been dismissive of, or simply oblivious to, the care and sensitivity required to conduct such research in a just and equitable way. In this issue of *Nature*, we explore the efforts of those who are reaching out to such communities anew (see page 290) and those looking to heal some of the wounds of colonialism (see page 294) by returning the remains of ancestors that had been excavated in the name of scholarship, some of it now discredited.

These efforts are essential. Without them, people who are already under-represented in DNA databases face being left further behind by modern medicine's slog towards precision and individualization — to the detriment of their health — and research databases will continue to be of limited scientific utility.

But steps to a more inclusive genomics are many and complex. An important starting point is to work with community leaders early in a project's development and to address their questions, rather than simply focusing on what scientists want to know. A crucial factor then is to involve Indigenous researchers as partners and leaders of the work that impacts their communities. Regular, open communication is important, because the needs and desires of a community can change during the course of a project. And findings must be reported to participants in a way that they can appreciate and that respects their own knowledge, which requires patience, humility and consultation.

Although there is no one way to accomplish these steps for all groups, one common denominator is time. These efforts take copious and unpredictable amounts of it. For researchers to make that time, funders, institutions, tenure committees and journals must recognize that the blistering pace of modern genome technology will not translate to the same type or rate of research output. ■