

nature structural & molecular biology

New data, please

Meetings and conferences are the best places to feature the latest results coming out of the laboratory. Unfortunately, not enough researchers take advantage of these opportunities.

The summer conference season is already in full swing. One of the great things about being a journal editor is the opportunity to go to different meetings (hopefully at beautiful locales), meet different people and learn about exciting new research. But this doesn't always happen — at least the part about seeing new research presented.

As editors, we are continually looking for the latest and most groundbreaking research, in the hope that we will be able to publish such work in our journal pages. As scientists, we are constantly looking to expand our knowledge into new areas and keep pace with the fields of research we are interested in. This is the main reason for us to attend meetings and conferences (and part of why we became editors in the first place).

Many meetings make the conference schedule as well as the list of speakers and titles available to attendees upon registration, giving some idea of what to expect (though, of course, broad-ranging titles such as 'Proteasome analysis' or 'Kinase function' crop up occasionally, along with the increasingly familiar 'TBA'). Other meetings keep it hush-hush until arrival, which can build anticipation for what's in store. Regardless of whether we are aware of the speaker list and have access to abstracts well in advance or learn these details only the day of, a sense of disappointment settles in when talk after talk reports already published work. Where's the excitement in that? Although presenting published work gives the audience the opportunity to ask questions about the major findings presented and advertises recent papers to those not directly in the field, it also takes away an opportunity to learn something new.

Of course, part of our job as editors is to solicit the best and most interesting work for possible publication in our pages, and one of the easiest ways to do that is to see it when it is first presented — so we have a vested interest in the presentation of new, unpublished work. But others attending the meeting are also looking to learn something new and to share and communicate ideas in the form of public presentations, in talks and poster sessions. It also benefits presenters to show new data, as it will

stimulate discussion about their work and perhaps highlight unforeseen issues while providing a forum to share ideas and collaborate.

Some conference organizers specifically ask invited speakers to focus on new data and make an effort to have a majority of the talks be about unpublished work. However, the new data often appears only at



the very end of a talk, encompassing perhaps the last few slides, which can be a letdown that leaves the audience wanting quite a bit more. The most ideal but least encountered situation is a presentation comprised of a few introductory remarks, to get the nonexperts up to speed on the system being examined, followed by interesting new insights from beautiful data that just begs to be published.

We understand that a lot of the hesitation about presenting a laboratory's most recent results may come from fear of being scooped.

It is surprising, though, how much ownership comes with being the first to present a finding. In fact, the amount of discussion new results generate can be an indicator of how well received they will be when finally sent to peer review, since the question-and-answer session that follows the presentation can itself be viewed as an open review process. An advantage to this is that any problems or oversights may be caught ahead of time by the very same group of colleagues who will probably be involved in formal assessment of the results submitted for publication.

If you are presenting new data and you are uncertain whether it is quite ready for publication, look out for the *Nature Structural & Molecular Biology* editors in attendance. Alert us to the fact that you are about to present new results. Not only will it get our attention and ensure that we will be listening carefully, it will also give you the best chance to prime us for a future possible submission and will get us thinking about the work that is coming out of your lab.

Whether it is in the form of a talk, a poster session or a high-profile publication, we are all here to learn and share what we know. It would be good if more scientists took advantage of the expertise gathered at the various meetings they attend by presenting their latest and greatest. ■