It's all about communication

Nature Cancer editors are always available to interact with researchers, be they authors, referees or readers.

Advancing science requires communication and, apart from being scientists (albeit not actively at the bench anymore), as *Nature Cancer* editors, we are at our core communicators dedicated to bringing the most exciting, high-quality cancer research to the cancer community, but we are also engaged in continuous dialogue with that community. Our interactions with researchers range from informal, ad-hoc discussions about their field of work and ongoing studies to more formal exchanges relating to manuscript submissions and journal decisions. Moreover, they can occur at all stages of a research project — from the early days of piecing together the first exciting results to the time of manuscript preparation and submission, and throughout the peer-review and publication process. In all such interactions, we are guided by the principles of confidentiality (including informal discussions with prospective authors, actual submissions and the anonymity of referees), fairness and consistency in our approaches and decisions.

In practice, given the volume of submissions we receive, we never meet or discuss directly with the majority of our authors — nor is this necessary. We approach each manuscript on the basis of its own scientific merits, keeping the field's and journal's standards in mind, and strive to reach fair and informed decisions for each study we consider, regardless of whether we may have had prior interactions with its authors. However, when researchers do reach out, we do our best to make ourselves available. Authors might get in touch prior to submitting their work for an informal discussion by email, phone and (increasingly) video. For a journal-level decision on the suitability of a study for *Nature Cancer*, we are open to pre-submission enquiries, which typically consist of limited information, such as the abstract and a cover letter, and are submitted through our online manuscript submission system. Conversely, if we require clarifications about a manuscript

submission, we would get in touch with the corresponding author. In addition, we are always available to answer the questions of prospective authors and provide direction on our journal policies and processes.

These interactions become more frequent when we send a manuscript for formal review. At that stage, they include the additional layer of engaging with referees and mediating their communications with authors, and they sometimes continue after we have reached a decision. For example, we frequently discuss further if authors have questions about proposed revisions that require additional editorial or referee input. We also provide clarifications when authors ask for deeper insight into what drove a negative decision. In such cases, our interactions might also involve colleagues at other *Nature* journals, if the authors have given us permission to gauge the potential interest of sister titles in receiving a transfer of a study declined by our journal. When authors strongly disagree with the basis of our decision, we remain open to hearing their point of view and have a formal appeal process in place to consider their arguments in detail.

The level of engagement with authors is very high when we invite revisions, and it truly heats up when we offer publication. At that point we provide very detailed instructions about the final revisions required to adhere to our policies and formatting guidelines ahead of formal acceptance of the study for publication, and we work very closely with the authors to ensure that these requirements are met. During the processing of the manuscript by our production team, we help authors navigate the final stages of the manuscript's pre-publication journey, plan publicity efforts through the journal, and we remain the point of contact if any issues arise after publication. Readers may also contact the journal with queries and comments, and we aim to respond to all as soon as we are able.

All these interactions also involve internal communications, most frequently

within the editorial team and with our colleagues on the administrative and production sides, to maintain an open and fair outlook on each manuscript we consider, and to provide clear and knowledgeable responses to each question we receive. No process is ever perfect, and thus we welcome feedback as we strive to continue improving, which adds another layer of communications, internal and with researchers, about things that operate well and others that may need some work.

Beyond the communication with researchers through the routine business of manuscript assessment and publishing, we actively seek out broader interactions with the community by attending conferences and visiting labs, in person or (predominantly during the years of the pandemic) virtually. We frequently give talks at conferences, participate in discussion panels about publishing, and welcome impromptu questions in these settings. We also welcome requests to meet, as, regardless of whether such meetings take place through a computer screen or in real life, they are an essential and very fulfilling part of our job. Not only do they help us learn about ongoing research and stay abreast of the latest developments in specific areas of the cancer field, but they also keep us engaged in discussions about standards, controversies, challenges and broader issues facing the cancer community today.

As *Nature Cancer* editors, we are deeply committed to advancing cancer research by facilitating the dissemination of the latest findings following constructive and rigorous editorial and peer-review processes, and we thrive on our interactions with the research community. We invite you to get in touch with us at cancer@nature.com or by contacting [individual editors](#), and we look forward to meeting you, electronically, virtually or in person. □

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