





6

### Case 1: Citing or comparing to methods on bioRxiv

A paper that reports a new computational method is under review at *Nature Genetics*. One of the reviewers asks the authors to cite a preprint on bioRxiv that reports a similar method. The reviewer also asks that the authors present a comparison of their method with the method reported in the preprint. (The reviewer is not an author of the preprint). The authors are aware of the preprint, as the corresponding author is also a reviewer on that paper, which is currently under consideration by *Nature Genetics*. Nature Research allows but does not require citation of preprints.

Discussion points:

1. How should preprint citations be handled?
2. Should the editors require the authors to include this citation or comparison?
3. A related topic (but not a consideration for this specific case): what if a method makes up an integral part of the analysis presented in a paper and that method is only available as a preprint?

Preprints at Nature Research / 07 May 2018




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

7

### Case 1: Outcome

As noted, Nature Research does not require citations to preprints, even if reviewers request it. In this case, the editor informed the authors that they were welcome to cite the preprint and compare to the method if they chose (though they should note that the paper was not yet peer-reviewed). The authors chose not to cite the preprint in this case.

On a related note, Nature Research does not have any official policy regarding methods posted as preprints. However, some journals have stated that methods integral to reproducing the results of a paper under consideration at the journal must be published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Editorial: "Methods, preprints and papers." *Nat. Biotech.* **35**, 1113 (2017).

Preprints at Nature Research / 07 May 2018




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

8

### Case 2: embargo policy

Authors of a paper submitted to one of the Nature Partner Journals posted their article to arXiv during the peer-review process. Partially due to the authors' affiliation, their preprint attracted a lot of attention from the media and online bloggers.

While the paper was still under consideration, the authors alerted the editors in chief to a potential problem. Many people (including reporters) were waiting to see the final paper and several blogs had already been posted and news stories written about the preprint. They also let the journal know that more articles were coming, possibly including physical newspapers. Since Nature's confidentiality policy indicates that authors are not to talk with the press, the authors held true to our policy. However, as more stories were being written on the preprint, they felt that they had a responsibility to make sure these articles were factually correct, since many reporters or bloggers did not mention whether the paper had been peer-reviewed or not. The authors were worried that not correcting these inaccuracies would endanger their future work in this field; if they could not talk to reporters about the preprints, the reporters could still easily download and read and write about.

Discussion points:

1. How should the editors in chief respond? Who at the journal or publisher needs to be informed?
2. If the authors discuss the paper with the press, does this in fact violate the stated embargo policy? What are their options?

Preprints at Nature Research / 07 May 2018




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Case 2: Outcome

The editors in chief brought the issue to the managing editors. After communication with our communications director, the head of policy and other stakeholders, we decided that since none of the authors of the preprint were involved in actively soliciting the media attention, we would not enforce the media embargo. We did not feel it would be in anyone's best interest to not correct any factual inaccuracies.

We asked the authors to reiterate to the media that since they are reporting on a preprint that has not undergone peer review, the findings should be viewed as provisional. We recommended that the authors stress to the reporters in all media contexts that a paper that has not yet undergone a full peer review may change significantly before it is published.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Thank you

Brooke LaFlamme (@brooke\_laflamme)  
Chief Editor, *Communications Biology*  
brooke.laflamme@us.nature.com  
<https://www.nature.com/commsbio/>  
@commsbio



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---