

Panel calls for more timely access to public genomic datasets

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A large panel of scientists has published a Public Forum piece in the journal *Science* calling for the scientific community to provide better access to public genomic datasets. They suggest the current system allows restrictions by researchers to slow or prevent access to such data, hindering research by others.

When a research team receives funds from a given entity to conduct genomic research, there often are stipulations regarding use of the data that results. When the entity is a public source such as a university or governmental agency, there is usually a requirement that the data that is generated be made public. This is because public funds paid for the research. But the timing of release or the method in which it is done can be problematic for other researchers who wish to use that data if the original research team withholds data. The reason a team might do so is to prevent being scooped by other researchers—they keep the data private until they have published their own results. In their paper, the authors call for an end to such practices, noting that timeliness of such data is often a factor in determining its value.

The authors call for rules that force research teams to make genomic datasets available as stipulated by the funding entity—even if it is immediately after they are generated. They argue that such data should be freely available to anyone who wishes to access it, even if the researchers who generated the data have not published the results of their efforts. They contend that the rights of public access outweigh the wishes of research teams.

The authors also call for a system that governs the creation and access of public genomic datasets. One part of such a system, they suggest, would

be journals refusing to publish results of research or [clinical trials](#) unless the researchers release the data in a timely fashion. They further call for a reward system. As one example, published papers regarding research by teams who used data generated by others would be required to list the source of the data. They also note that universities could institute policies to reward researchers who promptly release data as an incentive.

More information: Rudolf I. Amann et al. Toward unrestricted use of public genomic data., *Science* (2019). [DOI: 10.1126/science.aaw1280](https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aaw1280)

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