**Publishing in *Science* and *Nature* at La Trobe University**

So, I'm a mid-career researcher and I spend a lot of time writing research publications. And I have my regular set of journals that I publish in and these are all highly regarded journals, but lately, I've been wondering how I can make my research have a greater impact. I'm thinking of publishing in some of the prestigious journals, such as *Science* or *Nature*, but really don't know how to scope my research of interest for these journals. There are a number of colleagues at the University who have experience in publishing in *Science* or *Nature*, so today I'm off to seek some advice.

As a mid-career researcher, can you tell me a bit about publishing in *Science* or *Nature*?

I've published in *Science* and *Nature* quite a few – and *Science* only once. *Nature* – there's a whole stable of *Nature* journals – and I've published in that set of journals probably six or seven times.

My research focuses mainly on human origins, specifically trying to work out the age of fossils from various parts of the world, mostly working in South Africa. I've been lucky enough to be published in *Nature* once and *Science* three times.

My work was published in *Nature* just once, in 2012, and that project involved a new drug that we found could slow the progression of muscular dystrophy which is a muscle disease.

What enables you to get published in *Nature* and *Science* is often the research team that you are a part of. My first paper in Nature, I was part of a very good team with lots of very experienced people. I learnt an awful lot.

And it was a multi-disciplinary project involving researchers at Melbourne University, the Baker Institute, Deakin University, University of Oxford and McMaster University in Canada.

For career aspiration, what are the benefits of publishing in *Science* or *Nature*?

Oh look, I think when you are going through a selection process for a job or for grants and so on, there's no question that if you have publications in *Science* and *Nature*, that gets people's attention.

Publishing in *Science* or *Nature* is a jewel in a CV on its own, but the crucial thing that it does is move you to the next level in your career. Once you've published in *Science* and *Nature*, once you've got that demonstrated capacity to publish at the highest levels, people will back you in your further research, and your university will back you.

The biggest change has been probably my grant submissions. My track record certainly gets a higher rating now; it's recognised as being excellent track record rather than just your average track record.

It will also give you huge prestige in your field and give you the opportunity to identify collaborators and people to work with for your next piece of work.

Researchers that wouldn't otherwise talk to me about my own research at conferences have commented on that project which is – it's nice to get the recognition from a senior researcher.

When I was invited onto the team to answer a fundamental question of 'How old is the fossil?' So, in that case, I sort of got myself into a position because I'd published previously that people then came to me if they wanted that sort of research doing.

From the University perspective, publication in these journals does improve our rankings quite explicitly.

If you want to get a highly cited article, one of the best things you can do to start with is to publish in a highly cited journal, and *Science* or *Nature* are two of the most highly cited journals in the world.

The thing that strikes me most about those journals is they want a story to tell, so one advice I gave to a colleague was, if you can't tell the story about what the paper has to say in one or two sentences, then you are not going to get into *Nature* or *Science*. You have to know precisely what it is that you want to say and be able to say it clearly and succinctly. And that's what will impress the editors.

It is a bit of a skill because you have to get that sort of hook of why is it significant, what’s going to grab the imagination?

*Nature* is a different journal. It's more of a general interest journal, so rather than your standard journals that we might target in our own specific fields, it's punchier, shorter journals that have to appeal to a broader audience.

But fundamentally, I'm always thinking about whether my research will go into that arena or not. And in many cases I'm often thinking what sort of things would I need to do if the research went this way or that way. If this happened, then maybe we would be able to get it into that arena.

The title's important; make sure it's interesting and gets the editor's attention. And you will get rejected, but when that happens, write a letter to the editor and try and explain to them what they're missing and how good your paper is.

So many times you see people who have got a really interesting result, but haven't stopped to think about why it's significant. They've rushed into publication in a journal which is relatively easy to get into and not told the whole story.

So I've got lots of information and can now see that there are specific benefits for publishing in journals such as *Science* or *Nature*. It's highly valued by the University and it can substantially add to my track record, which may increase my research profile and who knows what important collaborations could come from that?

So, what do I do now? Well, I'm still going to continue to publish in my discipline-specific journals, but when I sit down to write a paper, I'm going to initially put down a few key sentences that really try to get at the impact of my research, show it to my colleagues, and if I think I've got a good story to tell, well then I'm going to try to submit to *Science* or *Nature*.

I know it won't be easy and I'm likely to get some rejections, but now, I no longer think it's impossible.