

[The Economist ~ The Shackles Of Scientific Journals](#)

SCIENCE advances fastest when data and conclusions are shared as quickly as possible. Yet it is common practice for medical researchers to hoard results for months or years until research is published in an academic journal. Even then, the data underpinning a study are often not made public.

The incentive to withhold findings is powerful. Journal papers are the de facto measure of a scientist's productivity. To win research money and get promoted, scientists need to accrue an impressive list of publications. Yet the delays in disseminating knowledge have the capacity to do real harm: during the Zika crisis, sponsors of research had to persuade publishers to declare that scientists would not be penalised for releasing their findings early. Nor are elite journals the guardians of quality that they often claim to be. The number of papers so flawed that they need to be retracted has risen sharply in the past two decades. Studies in elite journals (such as *Nature* and *Science*) are no more statistically robust than those in lesser journals.

Read more: <http://www.economist.com/shackles-scientific-journals>