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Embracing the Embargo

Floyd E. Bloom

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Why do we impose this period of silence, if one of our goals is to get the information out as quickly as possible? *Science* imposes its embargo policy in part because we feel that the general presentation of results should coincide with release of data. The policy also provides a level playing field for all media to report on our original findings. One week before the publication date, the embargoed information is made available, and correspondents have 1 week to investigate any papers that catch their eye. During this week, they are encouraged to interview our authors and other authorities in the field to assess the importance of the results and to ascertain remaining uncertainties. When the embargo is lifted at 4 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on the Thursday before the Friday publication date, comment on the *Science* lineup of original research for that week is allowed.

Science holds the view that such organized dissemination of important information through the public press leads to better quality coverage and public scrutiny of the achievements of scientific research. The embargo period provides sufficient time for reporters to analyze and report on the often complex stories behind the data. Authors choose to publish in *Science* in part because of the scientific awareness its papers carry to the world, both through its large circulation and the media coverage it reaps. Media coverage is good for authors because it makes clear to the public, both in funding circles and in the local press, their most recent scientific achievements. Wide coverage of scientific discoveries is good for the public and the scientific community because it illustrates the intellectual and practical value of publicly funded investment in scientific research.

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Science and other major journals aim to increase scientific understanding by adhering to an advance release embargo policy. We think our colleagues at the *New England Journal of Medicine* expressed our sentiments succinctly when they stated, "We are in the business of revealing, not suppressing information."* Embrace the embargo—it is for your benefit.

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provides
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field.

*J. P. Kassirer, *N. Eng. J. Med.* **327**, 1238 (1992).