

The diverse skills and many roles of in-house academic editors

Kate Mc Intyre & Jackie Senior



Scientific Editors, Department of Genetics
University Medical Centre, University of Groningen, the Netherlands

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Summary: The diverse skills and many roles of in-house academic editors

Academic researchers now need to publish at the highest level of impact, which puts non-native speakers of English at a major disadvantage. For an ambitious academic department, employing an in-house editor can help level the playing field. We will discuss the skills and attitudes needed for working on specialized tasks for different stakeholders, and present concrete and anecdotal evidence of our added value.

Our daily work for researchers, diagnostic laboratories and clinicians includes editing, translation, copywriting, teaching and website maintenance. Being available to comment at each step of the research process – from idea to proposal, from presentation to publication – makes us long-term participants in the training of PhD students and post-doctoral researchers, and in the department's research success. We must also be available for ad hoc discussions and, because we interact with people across the university hospital, our work includes the furthering of cross-communication.

For our specific editorial services, we need to keep up with the formatting, style guidelines, and content required by leading journals and funding bodies. We not only have to ensure that the English in a text is correct and comprehensible to a global audience, but also that the content is fit for purpose and of sufficiently high standard to give it the best chance of being published or funded.

As in-house editors, we must be interested in the department's work and scientifically literate. And, as any editors, we need to be calm, friendly and service-minded, flexible in our working hours, and able to cope with the stress of impossible demands and tight deadlines.

Two editors sharing one position

- We share 1 fte (38 hrs/week)
 - Full time salaried position with benefits
- Position of in-house editor
 - Instigated in the department by our director in 2007



University of Groningen

Founded in 1614

30,000 students

650 faculty

Groningen population

200,000

University Medical Centre Groningen

Research & teaching hospital

Largest in the region

Expert clinical centers

Rare diseases centers

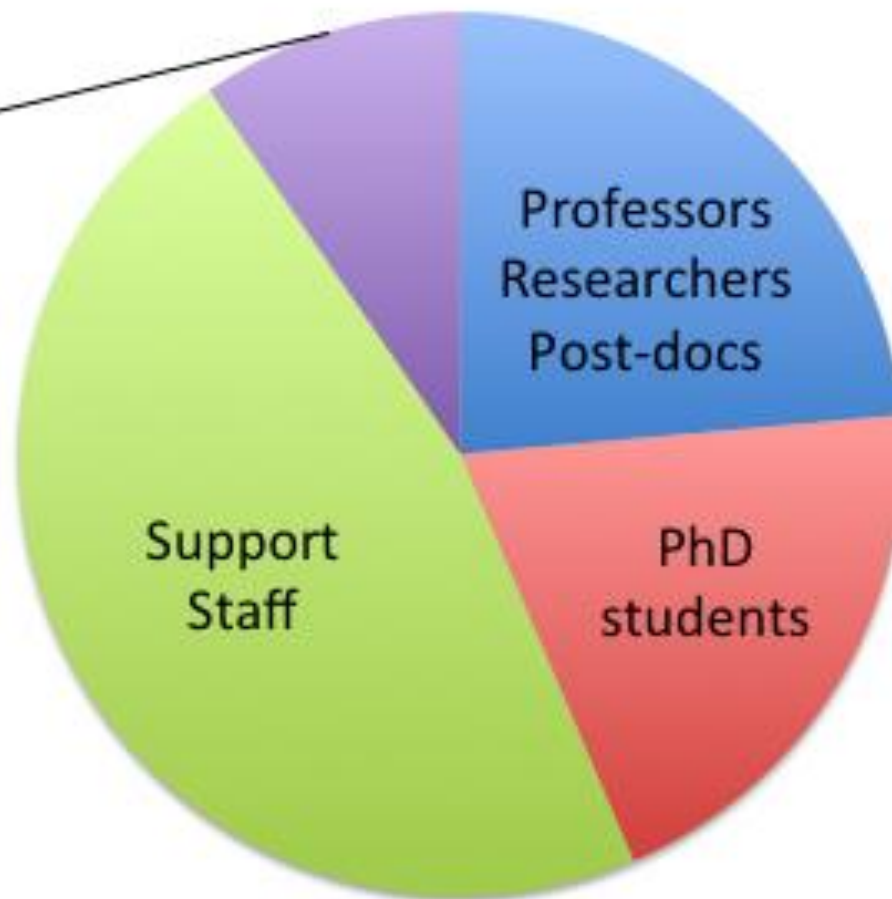
Transplant center

>50 international staff, of 30 nationalities
 per September 2016

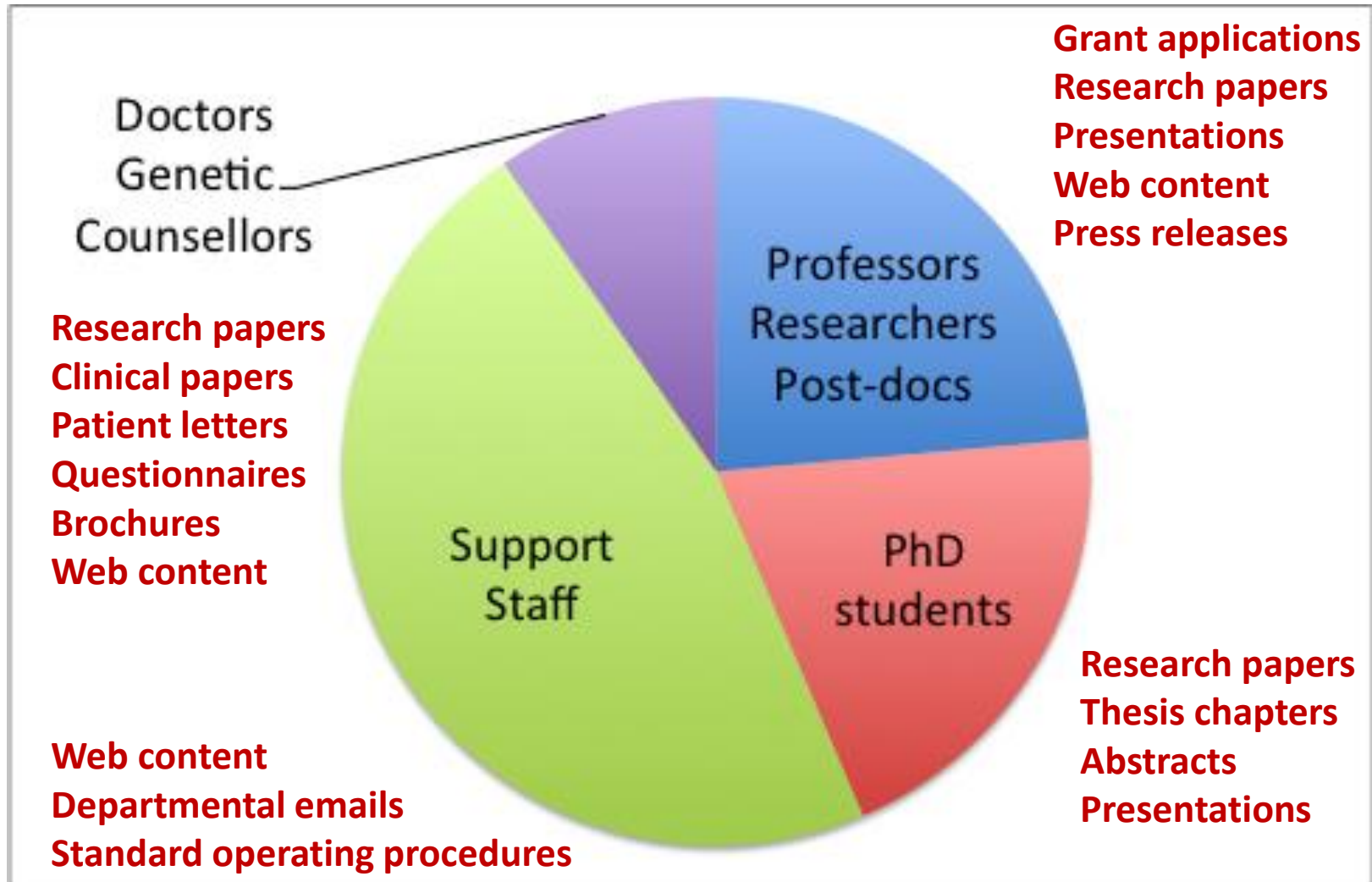


Department of >350 staff

Doctors
 Genetic
 Counsellors



Department of >350 staff



Types of work

- Editing
- Translation
- Website management
- Ad hoc discussions
- Feedback on presentations

Sharing the position

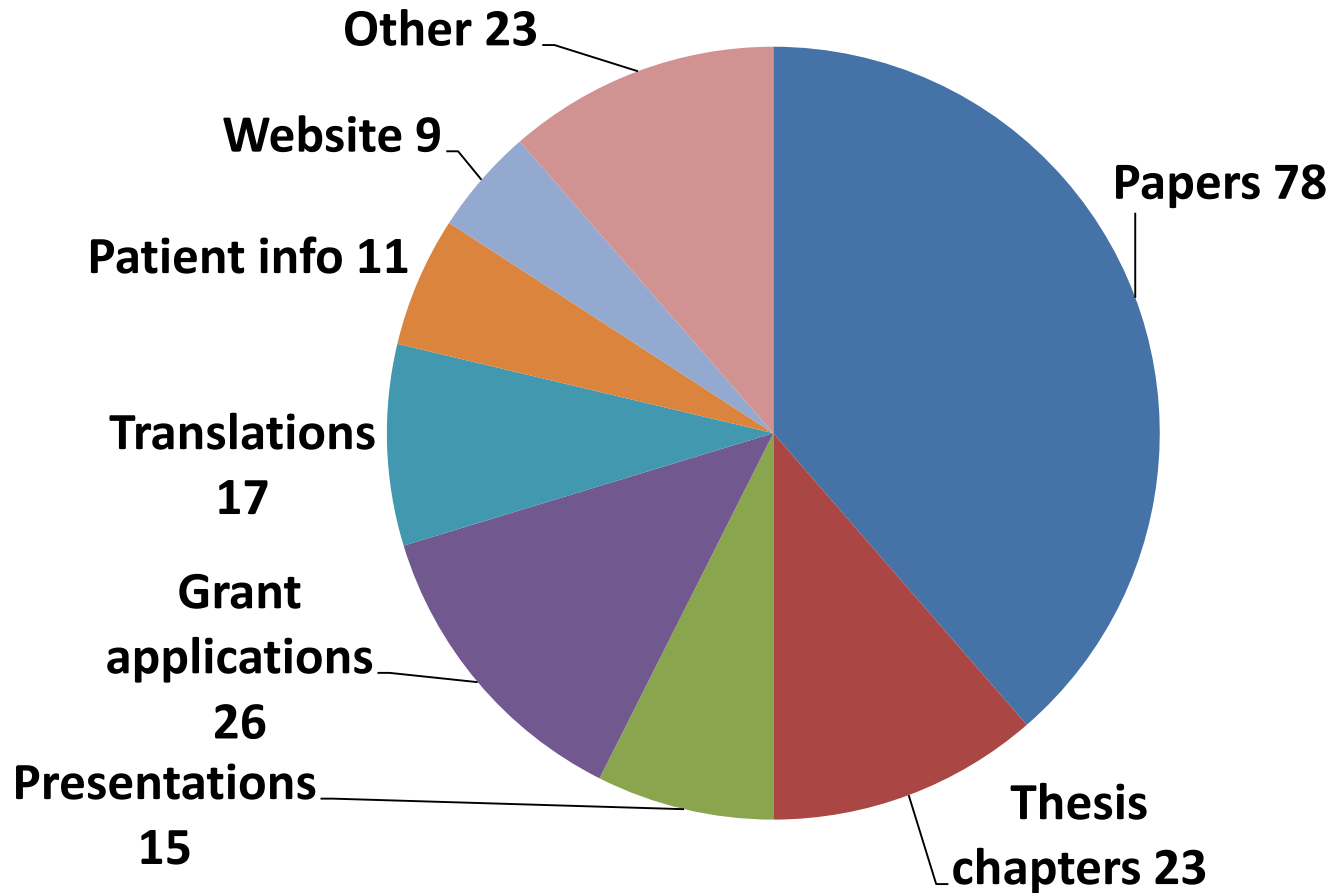
- Need work-sharing and cataloging system
- All jobs now logged on a Google worksheet
 - Announced
 - Delivered
 - Finished

Google Worksheet

Priority/ Deadline if applicable	Date In	Date Out	KM/JLS	Title/What	Author	Grant Application/ Type txt
				Cisca lid van Koninklijke Hollandsche Maatschappij der Wetenschappen (KHMW) email 16-C		w
	10-08			oncogen page	Rolf	W
	6/1/2016			Klaas Kok 1000 citations certificate + KWF grant		W
				mend ERC link to logo on CW page		W
DONE						p=paper, g=grant, o=o
	???	???	km	review	Floris	p**
	06-10-2016	06-10-2016	jls	congress abstract	Jan C Oosterwijk	o
by 6 Oct	29-09-2016	04-10-2016	km/jls	Vidi application	Sasha	g
by 6 Oct	29-09-2016	26-09-2016	km	Vidi application	Iris Jonkers	g
	19-0					p
						p
by 9/27/2016	16-0					p
	22-0					w
	26-0					o

- Online
- Constantly updated
- Read-only for clients
- Provides overview of yearly work

2015 task break down

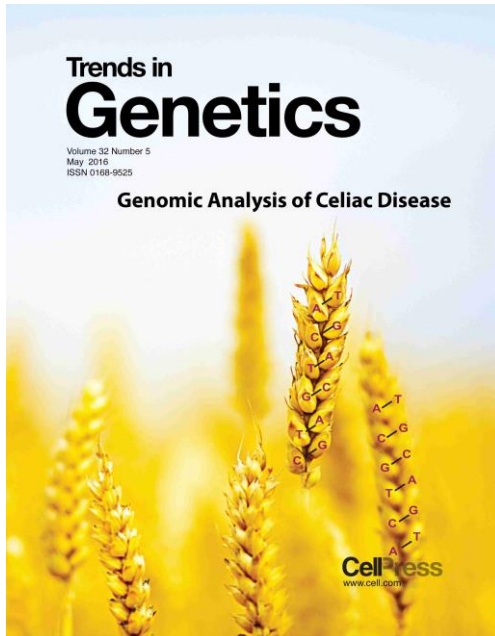


Editing research and clinical papers is still our main task

Content
Editing

Language
Editing

Scientific
Editing



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JOURNAL OF CLINICAL ONCOLOGY

ART OF ONCOLOGY

"It Is What It Is"

Jan C. Oosterwijk

From University of Groningen and University Medical Center Groningen, Groningen, the Netherlands.
Published online ahead of print at www.jco.org on February 16, 2016.

Authors' disclosures of potential conflicts of interest and author contributions are found at the end of this article.

Corresponding author: Jan C. Oosterwijk, MD, PhD, Department of Genetics, University of Groningen, University Medical Center Groningen, PO Box 30.001, 3700 RB Groningen, the Netherlands; e-mail: j.c.oosterwijk@umcg.nl.

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0732-183X/16/3411w-1279w/\$20.00
DOI: 10.1200/JCO.2015.65.9308

Mark looked at me shyly through his oversized Elvis Costello-style glasses. Was he feeling embarrassed by his own reply, or just waiting for my reaction? He was sitting between his mom and dad, wearing a T-shirt with a huge Minion print. His braces showed when he smiled, something he does often in a disarming way.

Over more than 20 years of working in the field of hereditary cancer as a clinical geneticist, I have witnessed many scientific developments and have met thousands of patients and families who were referred for genetic counseling. Routine becomes inevitable, but every now and then, there is someone or some family that sticks in my mind. Cycling home from the hospital at the end of that September day, I tried to figure out what it was in Mark's story that had moved me.

I first met this bright teenager, together with his parents, when he was referred by his general practitioner (GP) to our Family Cancer Clinic for genetic counseling and DNA testing. A genetic trait runs in the family that causes skin tumors, gynecologic problems, and kidney cancer. They know how the family history has evolved over the past 5 years and that Mark's mother carries a fumarate hydratase mutation that causes hereditary leiomyomatosis and renal cell cancer (HLRCC).

In the past 25 years, the notion that cancer can be hereditary has moved from an academic discourse among geneticists to mainstream modern medicine. The option of genetic counseling and testing is now part of many protocols in clinical oncology. What has made the difference and rewritten the script of patient-doctor interactions in hereditary cancer is the discovery

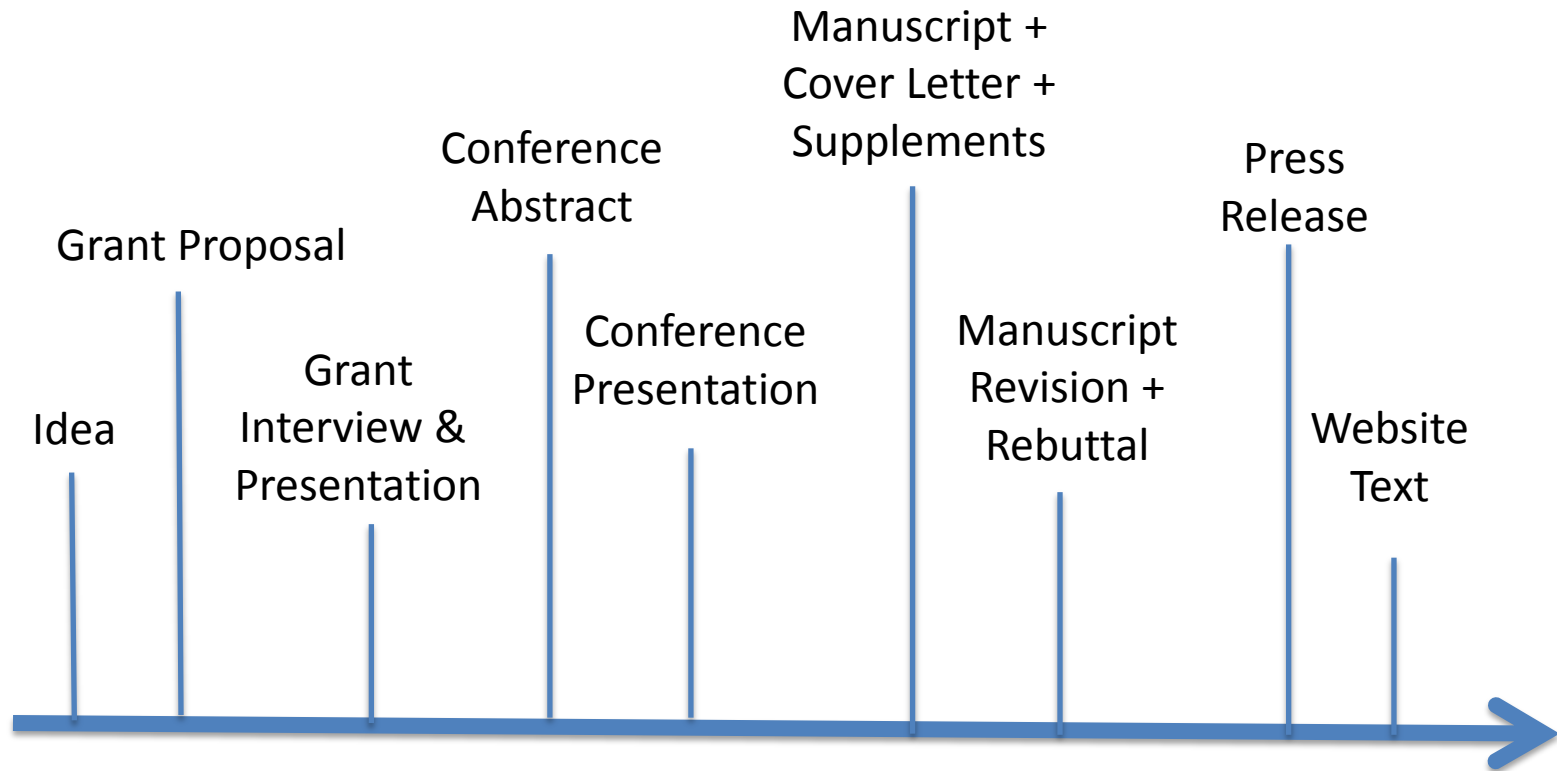
that a genetic predisposition is no longer synonymous with ill fate; it has become something carriers can act upon. Angelina Jolie's revelations of her preventive surgery were the finishing touch that further increased public awareness.

It is this actionability that led Mark's mother to ask their GP for a referral for genetic testing. Mark's mother had her uterus removed 3 years ago, and her kidneys are screened every 6 months. Mark is 13 years old and has always been in good health, but he has been suffering from headaches lately. His mother is worried, because Mark's cousin died of renal cancer a few years ago at the age of 18, and this event still echoes through the family. I cannot help noticing that Mark's 18-year-old sister is absent at this first consultation. I know she has not been tested.

I try to divide my attention between Mark and his parents and seek to adapt my language to that used by teenagers. Does it help that I have kitchen table conversations with my own, slightly older, kids? Things are "chill" or "uncool," jeans must be skinny, and social media is the world as they know it. His parents are worried, but what is Mark's point of view? Has he given much thought about it? Can Angelina Jolie be a role model for a 13-year-old boy?

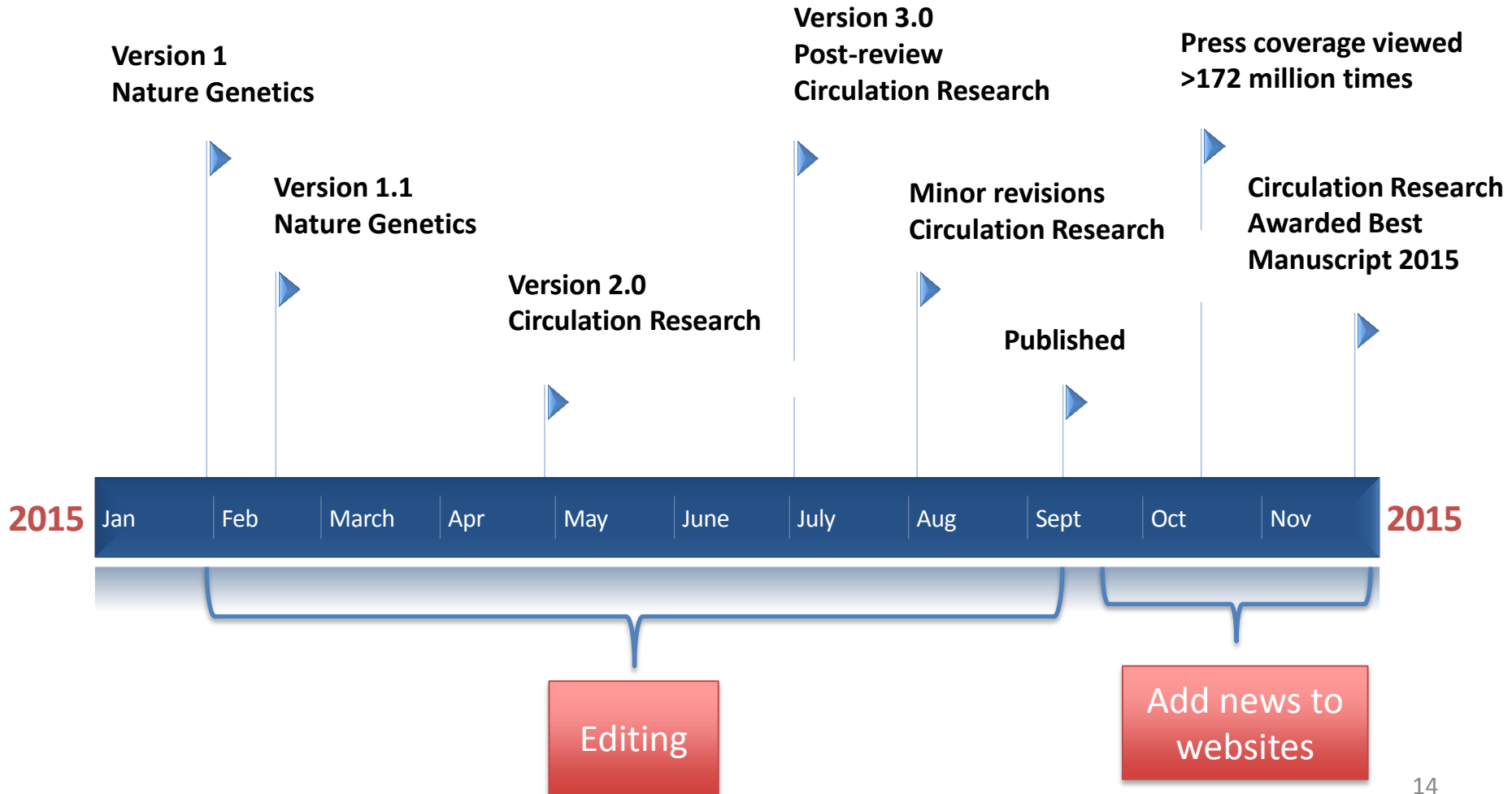
"So Mark, can you tell me what you know of this disease that runs in your family?" I take off my reading glasses, smile like he does, and try not to make it sound like a test. Mark quickly looks at his mother, who nods encouragingly. Mark starts to tell me what he had been discussing at home: that his uncle is being treated for painful skin problems, that his mother had an operation, and that the death of his cousin

“Conception to publication” editing



The Gut Microbiome Contributes to a Substantial Proportion of the Variation in Blood Lipids

Fu et al. Circulation Research 2015



“It Is What It Is”

Jan C. Oosterwijk, Journal of Clinical Oncology 2016





The message
 must be clear!



Our other roles in the department

- **Facilitating cross-communication**
 - We interact with more of the staff than most other employees
- **Taking the lead in implementing new policies**
 - ISO 9001 for the research section
 - Plagiarism detection: who should do it?
- **Tracking press coverage of high impact papers**

Advantages of in-house work

- Set working hours and job security
- Not running a business
 - No need to seek clients
 - No worry about non-payment
- Build up field-specific expertise
- Face-to-face interaction with clients

Disadvantages of in-house work

- Very ambitious department, who work all hours
 - so we need to be flexible
- Difficult to keep work within salaried hours
- Cannot turn away work
- Individual assignments are less discrete

Advantages for clients

- **Scientists & Medical Doctors can be Scientists & Doctors**
 - Not editors/typesetters/publishers
 - Focus on science in papers written by students
- **Students get personalized help**
 - Feedback on their English and academic writing
 - Help through the publication process
 - Easier to ask us questions

Advantages for department

- High impact journals set the bar very high
 - *Science* editor Laura Zahn
 - 75% submissions rejected pre-review
 - 6% finally published
 - In-house editors mean “poor English” is never an excuse to reject
- We share publishing experience and expertise across the department
- Authors have confidence to submit to top journals

Does our work matter?

- In the 2015 external review for ISO 9001 status
 - Native English-speaking editorial support cited as one of the department's strengths
 - First department in UMCG to receive ISO 9001
- Papers often praised by journal editors and reviewers

“Reviewer #2: An outstanding and timely paper, clearly written and illustrated. This reviewer can only congratulate the authors, having no criticism to express.”

The screenshot shows a list of articles from *Circulation Research*. The article titled "The Gut Microbiome Contributes to a Substantial Proportion of the Variation in Blood Lipids" is circled in red. The authors listed for this article are Jingyuan Fu, Marc Jan Bonder, Maria Carmen Cenit, Eetje F. Tigchelaar, Astrid Maatman, Jackie A.M. Dekens, Eelke Brandsma, Joanna Marczyńska, Floris Imhann, Rinse K. Weersma, Lude Franke, Tiffany W. Poon, Ramnik J. Xavier, Dirk Gevers, Marten H. Hofker, Cisca Wijmenga, and Alexandra Zhernakova. The article was published in *Circulation Research*, 2015;117:817-824, published online before print October 8, 2015.

The 10 Most Read Articles Published in *Circulation Research* in 2015
Roberto Bolli and for the Editors
Circulation Research. 2016;118:923-927, published online before print March 17, 2016
DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.1161/CIRCRESAHA.116.308583>
Download PDF

.... Marten H. Hofker, Cisca Wijmenga, Alexandra Zhernakova Abstract Rationale—Evidence suggests that the gut microbiome is involved in the development of cardiovascular disease, with the host–microbe interaction regulating immune and metabolic pathways. However, there was no firm evidence for associations ~~~

The Gut Microbiome Contributes to a Substantial Proportion of the Variation in Blood Lipids
Jingyuan Fu, Marc Jan Bonder, Maria Carmen Cenit, Eetje F. Tigchelaar, Astrid Maatman, Jackie A.M. Dekens, Eelke Brandsma, Joanna Marczyńska, Floris Imhann, Rinse K. Weersma, Lude Franke, Tiffany W. Poon, Ramnik J. Xavier, Dirk Gevers, Marten H. Hofker, Cisca Wijmenga and Alexandra Zhernakova
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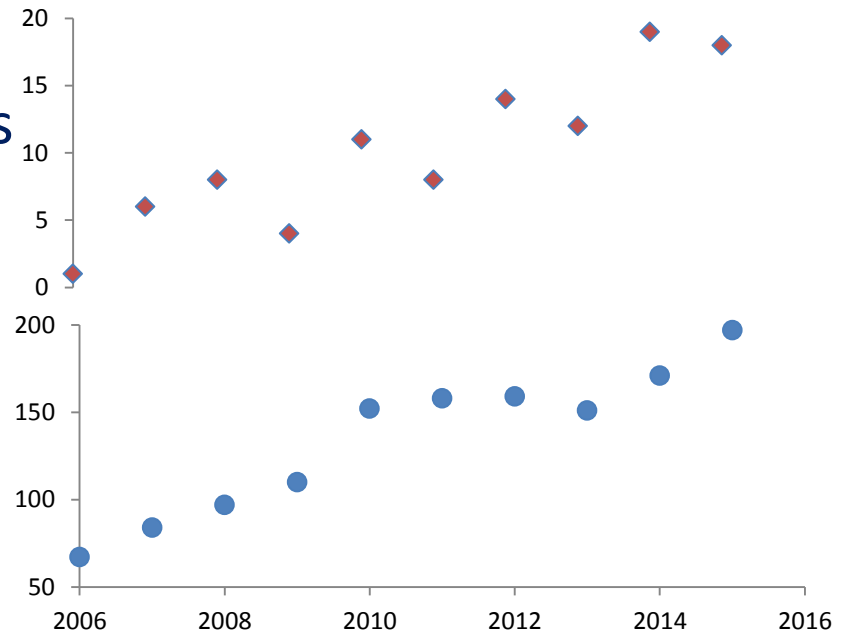
Subject

- Atherosclerosis (1)
- Genetics of cardiovascular disease (1)
- Genomics (1)
- Lipids (2)
- Lipids and Cholesterol (1)
- Mechanism of

Mechanism of atherosclerosis/growth factors (1)
News & Views (1)
+ Show More

Does our work matter?

- Number of papers in high impact factor (>30) journals increasing every year
- Total number of papers increasing every year
- Proposal funding rates higher than average



Funding Agency	UMCG Genetics	Average
NWO (NL)	50% (4/8)	15%
ERC	50% (2/4)	11%

Nice to be valued

“This thesis would definitely not have been the piece it is today without your magic wands. I was always scared before sending my manuscripts to you about what you would find of my nonsense. After your touch, everything flows.”

- Javier Gutierrez-Achury (Colombian PhD researcher)

Dec 2015

What do you need to do this work?

Skills

- Science background
- Strong verbal skills
- Academic writing experience
- Research skills
- Social skills

Attitudes

- Pragmatism
- Flexibility
- Perfectionism
- Independence
- Responsibility
- Curiosity

Is there overlap between in-house and freelancers?

- We employ freelancers
 - when workload gets too high
- Salaried editor working for multiple departments?
 - Less financial burden on individual department
- Freelance “conception to publication” service?

Contact

- Jackie L. Senior, j.l.senior@umcg.nl

<http://www.rug.nl/research/genetics/staff/jackie-senior>



- Kate Mc Intyre, k.mcintyre@umcg.nl

<http://www.rug.nl/research/genetics/staff/kate-mcintyre>

