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Health: Researcher thrives on printed word

By Josh Jennings

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At the forefront: Dr Hilda Pickett is a senior scientist at the Children's Medical Research Institute.

Like many scientists, Dr Hilda Pickett's day-to-day job involves a significant amount of lab work. She says she routinely spends time analysing the human cells she grows in incubators for cancer research. She gets to manipulate these cells extensively, she adds, extracting genes from them and endowing them with new ones. It's a process that yields regular results that Dr Pickett needs to make meaning from.

"Some experiments take several months, some take years and some can take just a couple of days. We get small findings all the time but really, the big metrics that we measure our research on are whether we publish. If we have a really interesting story, we aim to publish it." Dr Pickett is a senior scientist at the Children's Medical Research Institute. The broad aim of her job is to develop novel treatments specifically targeted to cancers.

This entails leading a group of six cancer researchers, overseeing their work and conducting lab experiments.

"A lot of it [time] is spent going through other people's data and establishing what that means, and reading a lot of published papers," says Pickett. "Thousands of papers are published every week and you really need to stay on top of the literature." Pickett completed her PhD into cancer research at the University of Leicester in 2002, and followed up with post-doctoral studies for Cancer Research UK at St James University Hospital in Leeds. She moved to Australia in 2005 to complete further post-doctoral studies at the Children's Medical Research Institute. In 2012, she began her present role.

She says one of the highlights of her career is getting to publish research findings. She was particularly pleased earlier this year, when she added to her publication record with a cancer-research paper in esteemed scientific journal *Nature Structural and Molecular Biology*.

"I think the paper is a really elegant and beautifully conducted study," says Pickett. "There's an enormous amount of work in it and I was very happy about that moment. That will increase my scientific profile quite substantially." Pickett says she aims to secure further grant funding that will enable her to continue to publish high-impact research in the next few years. She also intends to advance her research objectives by continuing to present at relevant conferences.

"It's always really important to present data at conferences so that other international scientists can see what you're doing. That can really take the field forward."

The story [Health: Researcher thrives on printed word](#) first appeared on [The Sydney Morning Herald](#).