

Cardiovascular disease epidemiologist named JAMA's new top editor

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News Editor

Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, MD, PhD, MAS, still recalls the excitement she felt early in her career upon learning that her study had been accepted for publication in *JAMA*[®].



Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, MD, PhD, MAS

For the prospective cohort study about NT-proBNP testing and cardiovascular disease events, she remembers “the editor in charge of the paper at the time demanding quite a number of additional analyses and revisions, many more than the reviewers had actually asked for and—finally—saying to us, ‘It’s really important we get things right. Because when *JAMA* publishes something, it affects clinical practice.’”

Now Dr. Bibbins-Domingo, who has had dozens of articles published in JAMA Network[™] journals and well over 300 altogether, will feel that special obligation on the other side of the desk in medical journalism. Starting July 1, the general internist, cardiovascular disease epidemiologist and national leader in the fields of disease prevention and health equity will become the editor-in-chief of *JAMA* and JAMA Network.

With each succeeding JAMA Network publication, Dr. Bibbins-Domingo has “seen firsthand how practice or policy has shifted as a result, not just because of the scientific finding, but because of its publication under the trusted name that *JAMA* represents,” she said during a news briefing this week. “It’s truly very special and I’m thrilled to now be part of it.”

AMA Executive Vice President and CEO James L. Madara, MD, said Dr. Bibbins-Domingo “will lead *JAMA* into a new era of publishing the groundbreaking research that is shaping the future of medicine and science.

“As a physician, scholar and leader, she has focused on health equity, on cardiovascular disease prevention—top priorities for the AMA—and more recently on COVID-19,” Dr. Madara added, lauding “her remarkable professional background ranging from basic science to an array of scholarly approaches to clinical studies.”

“First-rate physician-scientist”

Dr. Bibbins-Domingo is the Lee Goldman, MD, Endowed Professor of Medicine and chair of the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) School of Medicine.

She was also the inaugural vice dean for population health and health equity at the UCSF School of Medicine, which is one of the member schools of the AMA Accelerating Change in Medical Education Consortium. Dr. Bibbins-Domingo also co-founded the UCSF Center for Vulnerable Populations at the Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital.

In 2010, she joined the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) as it worked to rebound from controversy over its 2009 breast-cancer screening recommendations. Dr. Bibbins-Domingo led the USPSTF as the vice chair and chair from 2014–2017. In that role, she led the task force’s editorial process of systematic review of evidence, authorship of clinical guidelines, and multichannel publication of evidence and guidelines to physicians and patients. USPSTF recommendations are published in *JAMA* and *JAMA Network* journals.

“Dr. Bibbins-Domingo is a first-rate physician-scientist with broad and deep credentials spanning biochemistry, clinical science, population science and academic research,” said Otis Brawley, MD, who served as chair of the search committee, which included 18 leaders from across medicine and academia from throughout the country. “Her expertise in the areas of health policy and equity, along with her leadership acumen, gravitas and experience guiding complex enterprises uniquely qualifies her to be *JAMA*’s next editor-in-chief.”

Starting her career as a biochemist, Dr. Bibbins-Domingo trained in the laboratory of the Nobel laureate Harold Varmus, MD, and she is a National Institutes of Health-funded researcher who uses observational studies, pragmatic trials and simulation modeling to examine effective clinical, public health and policy interventions aimed at prevention. She earned her MD, biochemistry PhD and master's degree in clinical research from UCSF, and her bachelor's degree in molecular biology at Princeton University.

Laying a new foundation

Dr. Bibbins-Domingo is an inducted member of the American Society for Clinical Investigation, the Association of American Physicians, and the National Academy of Medicine. She becomes the second woman to hold the editor-in-chief position in *JAMA* history—after Catherine D. DeAngelis, MD, in 1999—and the first Black person to fill the role.

She will succeed Phil B. Fontanarosa, MD, who has served as interim editor-in-chief since last year. Dr. Fontanarosa co-wrote a June 2021 editorial, “Equity and JAMA Network,” on the important steps being taken by the 12 journals to advance diversity, inclusion and health equity in their activities. A 13th peer-reviewed journal, *JAMA Health Forum™*, made its debut in May 2021.

A focus on health inequity will be a “cornerstone” for how Dr. Bibbins-Domingo and her colleagues at JAMA Network approach their enterprise, she said.

“The fact that we have scientific discoveries that we translate into health for patients, but that they don't ... improve the health for all in society is actually one of the major problems that is shaping modern medicine,” Dr. Bibbins-Domingo added in the AMA news briefing. “This isn't a separate issue. This has to be a lens through which we see all of the ways we think about science. It is the way we think about what's the most important science to be published.”

Learn more about the AMA's strategic plan to embed racial justice and advance health equity.