

Researcher Takes the Reins at JAMA

New editor sees diversity and inclusion as priorities now in medical science **By Delia O'Hara**

In her inaugural editorial, Dr. Bibbins-Domingo wrote that under her leadership, JAMA will embrace the principles of open science, committing to a publication framework that supports “transparency and equitable, open access to research.”

KIRSTEN BIBBINS-DOMINGO, MD, PhD, MAS, the 17th editor in chief of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) and the *JAMA Network*, based in Chicago, had not previously worked as a journal editor before she took up her new job this summer. However, as a researcher, Dr. Bibbins-Domingo says she has come to realize that the way medical science is communicated can greatly affect the impact any individual study will have—on policy, patient care and future research.

That's because clinicians, population health specialists, researchers and even the public all look to peer-reviewed journals for trusted information on science, Dr. Bibbins-Domingo says.

“Journals like *JAMA* and the *JAMA Network* play such an important role in the scientific ecosystem and how it shapes our practice of medicine,” she says. The *JAMA Network* comprises 13 journals.

Dr. Bibbins-Domingo is also a professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), and sees patients twice monthly in the general medicine clinic at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital (ZSFG). Of the *JAMA* post, she says, “This felt like an opportunity to have a real impact on health.”

She wants to be sure that *JAMA* is always asking, “Are we doing the best job we can internally? Do we have the right people in the room not only here in Chicago, but across our expanded network of teams that help us vet the content for the journals?” she says.

Dr. Bibbins-Domingo was the vice dean for population health and health equity at UCSF, and the founding co-director of the UCSF Center for Vulnerable Populations at ZSFG, a research institute dedicated to reducing health disparities. She sees diversity and equity as being central to medical science now. “We are all caring for an increasingly diverse population of patients,” she says; new discoveries must be both applicable and available to everyone.

“When we're not proactive about including diverse populations in trials, we might be quite



literally denying patients access to the very treatments they need,” she says. It's also important to “create a body of knowledge about any new therapy that is applicable to all.”

In her inaugural *JAMA* editorial, Dr. Bibbins-Domingo wrote that under her leadership, *JAMA* will embrace the principles of open science, committing to “adapting our publication framework to support transparency and equitable, open access to research.” The *JAMA Network* presently has two open-access journals.

Dr. Bibbins-Domingo sees open science as being necessary to communicating science effectively, with the end goal of serving patients better. “If we want to change practice, people have to have access to the information,” she says.

Dr. Bibbins-Domingo says that she will split her time between Chicago and San Francisco. She and her husband, entrepreneur Patrick Domingo, have one grown son. They recently purchased a home within walking distance of her new job at *JAMA*. She loves to walk and she and her husband are looking forward to exploring Chicago, especially its restaurants. “I'm excited to learn more about the city,” she says. 

Career Highlights

DR. BIBBINS-DOMINGO earned her bachelor's degree from Princeton University in New Jersey and completed postgraduate work in chemistry at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. She obtained her medical degree, a doctorate in biochemistry and a master's degree in clinical research from the University of California, San Francisco, where she also was a resident in medicine, and a fellow in both medicine and general internal medicine. In 2017, she received the UCSF Chancellor's Award for Public Service. As a professor working with “the next generation of physicians and scientists, my proudest accomplishments are watching them get their first paper [published] in *JAMA*, their first big successes,” Dr. Bibbins-Domingo says.