

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Improving Women's Health Across the Life Span— *JAMA Internal Medicine* Call for Papers

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Even though most patients of general internists and internal medicine specialists are women, our knowledge of women's health and illness is remarkably sparse. Women's health is often conceptualized solely as reproductive health without consideration of health issues throughout the life span. Moreover, persons who are pregnant or could become pregnant are often excluded from clinical trials so that health care choices for women of reproductive age are typically extrapolated from clinical research that was performed mostly among men. Women face complex social determinants of health, due to their disproportionate roles in birthing, raising children, caring for elderly individuals, and the need to navigate a society that is often misogynistic and sometimes hostile, even violent. In addition, the intersection of social identities like gender, sex, race, ethnicity, and class plays a crucial role in women's well-being. Finally, there is much to learn about how health policies can support women's health.

Recognizing there is great need, we believe that the time is ripe to make great strides in improving women's health through research and commentary. Advances in the basic sciences have supported major breakthroughs in our understanding of cancer, autoimmune diseases, and many other conditions. New clinical study designs to enhance causal inference and the ability to create, store, and mine huge clinical databases have promoted the rapid advance of evidence-based clinical medicine. Currently, the growth of machine learning and artificial intelligence promise even more rapid advances, while at the same time presenting new challenges and risks.

Therefore, as Editors of *JAMA Internal Medicine*, we are committed to championing efforts to improve and expand research and commentary that impacts women's health and well-being. In this Editorial, we announce the *JAMA Internal Medicine* series "Improving Women's Health Across the Life Span." We intend to publish an ongoing series of articles including research, opinion, and clinical reviews, as well as stories related to women's health. To facilitate this effort, we have created a cadre of distinguished women's health reviewers who will bring their expertise to this effort and will be recognized on our masthead. This call for papers is open now, and we encourage submissions. Authors should follow our Instructions for Authors for specific article types.¹

Through our series, we are committed to advancing research and health care relevant to all women, including people assigned female sex at birth. We will expect authors to use defi-

nitions of sex and gender that are consistent with those published by the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine,² the National Institutes of Health,³ and the AMA Manual of Style.⁴ Authors should follow the *JAMA Internal Medicine* Instructions for Authors,¹ which require authors to define how sex or gender was assessed and to report sex and/or gender of the sample studied. We also strongly encourage authors, whenever possible, to report all main outcomes stratified by sex or gender as appropriate.

Our effort mirrors several national initiatives that have emphasized the need and the opportunity to improve health and health care for women. The President of the United States, Joseph R. Biden, recently announced the White House Initiative on Women's Health Research, noting that "The initiative is committed to galvanizing the Federal government and the private and philanthropic sectors to spur innovation, unleash transformative investment to close research gaps, and improve women's health."⁵ Led by the First Lady, Jill Biden, EdD, and the Gender Policy Council, and chaired by Carolyn Mazure, PhD, director of Women's Health Research at Yale University, the initiative has tasked multiple federal departments and agencies, including the US Department of Health and Human Services, the National Institutes of Health, Veterans Affairs, and the Food and Drug Administration, to deliver concrete recommendations to advance women's health research. The White House initiative will decide on areas of focus within these agencies and explore new public-private partnerships with philanthropic leaders. Mazure notes that she has "had the opportunity to see women's health research become a recognized field of study that spans all health conditions experienced by women, its exponential growth in published data, innovations in care, and new careers in women's health research. Nevertheless, women remain at higher risk for chronic disease and disability, for acute and chronic pain syndromes, and to die following heart attack. Women are also at higher risk for adverse effects of treatments and for co-occurring conditions. There is a tremendous need for science to move forward in supporting research that targets the health of women to improve outcomes for women."⁶

Similarly, to highlight the long-standing inequities in women's health and to propel solutions, the National Academy of Medicine (NAM) selected women's health as the subject of its 2023 Annual Meeting Scientific Symposium titled "Women's Health: From Cells to Society." In this issue, we published a summary of the keynote address⁷ and of selected presentations⁸ from

the NAM scientific symposium. In her keynote address, Paula A. Johnson, MD, MPH, President of Wellesley College, called for a bold agenda, spanning basic sciences to policy initiatives, to improve women's health across the life span.⁷ In their Viewpoint, Karen DeSalvo, MD, MPH, MSc, Chief Health Officer at Google, and Victor J. Dzau, MD, President of NAM, discuss highlights from the NAM symposium, including key gaps, trends, and opportunities.⁸

Finally, as a prime example of the role of philanthropy and the power of collaboration, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the National Institutes of Health Office of

Research on Women's Health recently convened the Innovation Equity Forum. This group of more than 250 experts and stakeholders created a Women's Health Innovation Opportunity Map that identifies 50 opportunities to catalyze innovation in research and development to improve the health of women.⁹

The Editors of *JAMA Internal Medicine* are excited to launch this important and wide-reaching effort to support researchers and authors by publishing high-quality research, commentary, stories, and educational material to catalyze clinical, public health, and policy advances in women's health.

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