

# Advancing *Pediatrics* During Turbulent Times

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As journal editors, we strive to publish high-quality, clinically relevant articles to help our readers improve health outcomes for children and adolescents and advance the field of pediatrics. In our roles as editors, pediatricians, and parents, we recognize the immense direct and indirect impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic on patients, families, communities, and all who provide pediatric health care services. These turbulent times are often overwhelming and accompanied by a feeling that these challenging times will never end. We have great admiration for the innovative work that continues to be submitted despite these challenges to our journal by clinicians, researchers, and policymakers to help us understand and address the changing clinical needs of our patients and improve well-being for our patients, their families, and ourselves. As we described in our annual commentary last year, we continue our focus on addressing systemic racism in the articles that we publish.<sup>1</sup> We are grateful for the authors who have shared their work with us and the feedback from our readers on this critical issue.

We all learned important lessons from articles we published in the last year about the role of systemic racism in the risk of COVID-19 morbidity and mortality, the likelihood of receiving COVID-19 testing and vaccination, the exacerbation of adverse social determinants of health, and the development or worsening of depression or suicidality. As a result, we have become more committed to providing a

forum in our journal to address systemic racism, and developing strategies to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion. This past year, we introduced a regular feature section dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion specifically focused on addressing these issues. Please see our author guidelines if you are interested in learning more ([pediatrics.aappublications.org/page/author-guidelines](https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/page/author-guidelines)).

We are also committed to ensuring that issues of equity and systemic racism are appropriately addressed in all sections of the journal, which led us to update our instructions to authors regarding the appropriate use of race and ethnicity to ensure that race and ethnicity are considered to reflect a social construct, instead of differences in biological factors.<sup>1</sup> We also ask our reviewers to pay specific attention to the appropriate use of race and ethnicity when they evaluate a manuscript. This change has led to important improvements in how authors communicate complex issues related to systemic racism.

We also continue to work to ensure that the composition of the editorial board represents the diverse demographics of the broader community of children and adolescents that we serve. We recognize that we could improve the journal by expanding the range of experiences represented by editorial board members. To do so, we have expanded the inclusion of nonpediatric health care professionals and public members onto our editorial board. For example,

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last year we created a new associate editor position for a nonpediatrician public member to oversee our Family Partnerships articles and to develop strategies to improve communication with the public. After a national search process that yielded many qualified candidates, Ms. Cara Coleman, the director of public policy and advocacy for Family Voices, was selected for this position. This month, Ms. Coleman will be launching a blog that offers family perspectives on research articles published in the journal. The articles discussed in this blog will be provided free to the public online, with the hope these blogs and articles will lead to important new conversations between pediatricians, patients, and their families.

To help further disseminate important findings from studies published in *Pediatrics*, our editorial team has been invited to participate in the new weekly American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) podcast “Pediatrics On Call,” which can be found at [www.aap.org/podcast/](http://www.aap.org/podcast/). The first week of each month, we preview the current issue and highlight new findings that could improve practice. Authors from some of the studies we publish are also featured in subsequent weekly episodes of the podcasts each month.

We are also proud that our new journal Web site went live in November 2021. We heard from our readers about the need for easier access to all our content, including published articles, blogs, videos, and other social media content, which all help make the articles we publish in *Pediatrics* even more front and center in daily practice. The online location of the main journal Web site has not changed ([pediatrics.aappublications.org](http://pediatrics.aappublications.org)); however, the AAP has developed a new integrated Web platform, “AAP Publications” ([publications.aap.org](http://publications.aap.org)), as a central location for all its journals, including *Pediatrics* and journal-related content, as well as AAP News, Point-of-Care Solutions, the AAP Red Book,

and other published books. This unified platform gives our readers one-stop access to all AAP content.

Even with the new and easier ways to find published articles, our editorial board is committed to making high-impact studies available to those who are not AAP members or subscribers through open-access publication. Currently, we have three strategies for open-access publication. First, we select articles each week to be freely available. These include all clinical policy recommendations and articles that are of critical importance to the field. For example, all COVID-19–related articles and all articles that address systemic racism have been made open access. Second, articles not initially published as open access are freely available 1 year after publication and remain open to the public without a subscription or download fee for 4 years. Finally, authors are given 2 options for having their work made open access. The “green” open access option is available at no charge to nongovernmental institutions that require a version of a pre-edited version of the accepted paper on their online repository with the copyright and final copyedited version remaining with the AAP. The final version of green open-access publications is embargoed for 1 year. The “gold” open-access option is available for a fee to government funders who mandate open access or for authors who would prefer to own the copyright of the article so that they can immediately release their study to the public. The gold option fee covers the production cost for the publication. Authors who choose the gold option must still agree to attribute the article to the AAP as the publisher and to allow the AAP to produce the publication, such as in the journal, on the Web site, or as part of a thematic collection. More information about these options is available at [pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics-open-access](http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics-open-access).

We are also excited to announce that by 2023, we will be introducing another way for authors to share their work by the creation of a separate and fully open-access journal. This new journal will follow the same editorial policies and have the same high standards as *Pediatrics*. The new journal will be managed by an independent editorial board that will include 2 co-editors. We look forward to sharing more information about this new addition to our journal family and will be putting out a call for nominations for its editorial board later this year. Be reassured that even with a new AAP open-access journal, *Pediatrics* will continue to publish the important and original pediatric research on which readers depend.

Thus, even during these turbulent times, *Pediatrics* has grown and changed to help everyone vested in improving the health and well-being of children. We are committed to maintaining our mission of providing timely, evidence-based scientific information and supporting lifelong learning. We look forward to your ongoing feedback to make sure our mission is achieved now and long after this pandemic has ended.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AAP: American Academy of Pediatrics  
 COVID-19: coronavirus disease 2019

## REFERENCES

1. First LR, Larson K, Puskarz J, Kemper AR. Reflecting on 2020 and planning for *Pediatrics* in 2021: finding opportunity in the midst of difficulty. *Pediatrics*. 2021;147(1):e2020040378