



The BMJ

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## Fiona Godlee to step down as *The BMJ*'s editor in chief

Zosia Kmietowicz

Fiona Godlee is to resign as editor in chief of *The BMJ* at the end of this year, after more than 16 years in the role.

Godlee first joined the journal as an assistant editor in 1990 and became editor in chief in March 2005, the first woman to lead it since its inception in 1840.

Under her editorship *The BMJ* has become firmly established as one of the world's most influential and most widely read medical journals, defined by its mission to work towards a healthier world for all. The journal's impact factor, a measure of the importance or rank of a journal, has risen from 7 in 2005 to 39.8 today, and in the past five years worldwide usage on [bmj.com](http://bmj.com) has grown from around a million unique users a month to nearly six million.

*The BMJ* has also become an investigative campaigner and a force for change, continuously challenging the status quo, by highlighting research fraud and misconduct, campaigning for greater independence from industry influence, tackling the harms of excess medical treatment, advocating for action on climate change, and championing the involvement of patients and the public in research and healthcare.

Most recently Godlee was instrumental in the UK government's decision to abandon plans to allow households to mix over Christmas, almost certainly helping to prevent deaths from covid-19.

Her work during the pandemic was recognised last week when she won editor of the year in the Association of British Science Writers awards.<sup>1</sup> The judges said, "There was nothing more that anyone could ask for the title of editor of the year: vision, creativity, leadership, execution, and impact."

Godlee has also been the editorial director of BMJ, the company, helping it to extend its reputation as a pioneering publisher and champion of open access research. In 2011 BMJ launched what has become one of the world's largest open access medical journals, *BMJ Open*. And in 2019 it was a founding partner of medRxiv, the first dedicated preprint server for medical and health sciences.

Today a third of BMJ's 70 journals are open access, promoting the exchange of ideas and rapid access to knowledge, to improve health and healthcare globally.

Godlee said, "It has been the great privilege and joy of my professional life to work at *The BMJ* and to help it develop as an international voice for improving the quality of medical research and practice. I'm deeply grateful to everyone I've worked with over the years, mentors, colleagues, advisers, and contributors around the world, and I'm immensely proud of *The BMJ* team—there can be no more intelligent, creative, and professional group of people.

"BMJ is heading into a new and exciting phase of its development, so it's the right time for new leadership. Hard though it is to give up something you love, I'll be leaving the journal in excellent hands. I look forward to exploring new opportunities that continue my interests in improving health and protecting the environment."

Chris Jones, BMJ's chief executive officer, thanked Godlee for her energy, integrity, and dedication to the company's mission of helping to create a healthier world.

"The pandemic has seen unprecedented interest in what we publish, and Fiona has shown extraordinary leadership, compassion, and clarity of thinking during this challenging time," he said.

Chaand Nagpaul, the British Medical Association's chair of council, said, "We've been incredibly fortunate to have someone of Fiona's calibre at the helm of *The BMJ* for the past 16 years. I'm in no doubt that her commitment to fairness, equality, and quality of care and her courage in addressing issues such as racism in the NHS will have a lasting impact for doctors and patients alike.

"I would especially like to thank her for the incredible support she has given us as a profession throughout the pandemic. On behalf of all BMA members I'd like to wish Fiona all the very best for the future."

1 Association of British Science Writers. ABSW Awards 2021: shortlists and winners <https://www.absw.org.uk/pages/115-absw-awards-2021-shortlists-and-winners>.