ARISTOTLE MEDICAL FORUM

NICHOLAS CHRISTAKIS

Nicholas A. Christakis, MD, PhD, MPH, is a social scientist and physician at Yale University who conducts research in the fields of network science, biosocial science, and behavior genetics. His current work focuses on how human biology and health affect, and are affected by, social interactions and social networks. He directs the Human Nature Lab and is the Co-Director of the Yale Institute for Network Science. He is the Sterling Professor of Social and Natural Science, appointed in the Departments of Sociology; Medicine; Ecology and Evolutionary Biology; Biomedical Engineering; and the School of Management.

Dr. Christakis received his BS from Yale in 1984, his MD from Harvard Medical School and his MPH from the Harvard School of Public Health in 1989, and his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania in 1995. He was elected to the National Academy of Medicine in 2006; the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 2010; and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2017.

One body of work in his lab focuses on how health and health behavior in one person can influence analogous outcomes in a person's social network. This work involves the application of statistical and mathematical models to understand the dynamics of diverse phenomena in longitudinally evolving networks. A related body of work uses experiments to examine the spread of altruism, emotions, and health behaviors along network connections online and offline, including with large-scale field trials in the developing world directed at improving public health (e.g., in Honduras and India). His lab has also examined the genetic and evolutionary determinants of social network structure, showing that social interactions have shaped our genome, with related projects that have mapped networks of populations in Tanzania and Sudan who live as all humans did 10,000 years ago. His most recent work has used artificial intelligence (AI) agents ("bots") to affect social processes online.

Dr. Christakis is the author of over 200 articles and several books. His influential book, Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives, documented how social networks affect our lives and was translated into twenty foreign languages. Blueprint: The Evolutionary Origins of a Good Society, was published in March 2019 and is slated to appear in German, Chinese, Dutch, and Greek, and other languages. His most recent book, Apollo's Arrow: The Profound and Enduring Impact of Coronavirus on the Way We Live was published in October 2020.

In 2009, Christakis was named by Time magazine to their annual list of the 100 most influential people in the world. In 2009 and in 2010, he was listed by Foreign Policy magazine in their annual list of Top 100 Global Thinkers.