AACR SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS 2023-2024



Since 1961, the AACR has presented hundreds of Prizes, Awards, and Lectureships to recognize the scientific achievements of scientists, clinicians, and physician-scientists who have collectively made significant contributions to the understanding, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of cancer.

The AACR honors these outstanding individuals for their extraordinary accomplishments and for embodying excellence in cancer research.

For more information concerning AACR's Scientific Achievement Awards including eligibility criteria and nomination deadlines, visit **AACR.org/SAA**.



AACR AWARD FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN CANCER RESEARCH

Steven A. Rosenberg, MD, PhD, FAACR

Senior Investigator Center for Cancer Research Chief, National Cancer Institute Surgery Branch Head, Tumor Immunology Section National Cancer Institute Bethesda, MD

For lifelong scientific achievements and paramount contributions to cancer research and patient care, most notably his pioneering research that established interleukin-2 (IL-2) as the first U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved cancer immunotherapy and his major contributions to establishing fundamental principles involving cellular and genetic engineering and immunotherapeutic development.



AACR AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN BASIC CANCER RESEARCH

Sarah-Maria Fendt, PhD

Principal Investigator Center for Cancer Biology, VIB Professor of Oncology VIB-KU Leuven Center for Cancer Biology Leuven, Belgium

For seminal contributions to deciphering the role of metabolic rewiring during cancer invasion and metastasis and for defining the principles of metabolic regulation that enable cancer cell plasticity and heterogeneity. Dr. Fendt has described novel functions of phosphoglycerate dehydrogenase (PHGDH) in the initiation of cancer metastasis and discovered that lipid-rich environments promote metastasis by activating signaling pathways that subsequently drive therapeutic resistance.



AACR AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN BLOOD CANCER RESEARCH AWARD SUPPORTED BY ABBVIE

Owen N. Witte, MD, FAACR

President's Chair in Developmental Immunology University Professor of Microbiology, Immunology and Molecular Genetics, Molecular and Medical Pharmacology Director Emeritus, Eli & Edythe Broad Center of Regenerative Medicine and Stem Cell Research University of California, Los Angeles Los Angeles, CA

For unprecedented contributions to elucidating the role of tyrosine kinases in hematologic malignancies and for his pivotal role in developing novel cancer treatments. He was the first to identify the Abl fusion oncoprotein in leukemia and to predict that mutated ABL kinase could serve as a viable drug target, which would in turn lead to the development of imatinib as a frontline therapy for chronic myeloid leukemia. He later described Bruton's tyrosine kinases (BTK) as key drivers of antigen-activated lymphomas and autoimmune disease, a breakthrough discovery that would result in the clinical development of the FDA-approved BTK inhibitor, ibrutinib, for the treatment of B cell lymphoma. AACR AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN CHEMISTRY IN CANCER RESEARCH

Nathanael S. Gray, PhD, FAACR

Krishnan-Shah Family Professor of Chemical and Systems Biology Stanford University Stanford, CA

For pioneering innovative structure-based chemical biology approaches to designing and developing protein inhibitors and degraders that have revolutionized the future of cancer therapeutics; and for spearheading novel combinatorial chemistry and genomic approaches that have resulted in the development of several cancer therapies, including ceritinib, osimertinib, and purvalanol.



AACR DANIEL D. VON HOFF AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN CANCER RESEARCH

Anil K. Rustgi, MD

Herbert and Florence Irving Professor of Medicine Herbert and Florence Irving Director Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center Associate Dean of Oncology Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons Chief of Cancer Services, New York Presbyterian Hospital and Columbia University Irving Medical Center Special Advisor to the President, Cancer Programs and Strategies Columbia University New York, NY

For remarkable leadership and heralded efforts to support the education and training of countless undergraduate and graduate students and postdoctoral fellows who have subsequently translated Dr. Rustgi's tutelage into establishing their own successful careers throughout the cancer research community.



AACR DISTINGUISHED LECTURESHIP IN BREAST CANCER RESEARCH AWARD SUPPORTED BY AFLAC, INC.

Kornelia Polyak, MD, PhD, FAACR

Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School Department of Medical Oncology Dana-Farber Cancer Institute Boston, MA

For dissecting the role of intratumor heterogeneity in breast cancer and metastatic disease to develop risk assessment and personalized cancer therapy models and for extensively characterizing the metastatic potential of polyclonal tumors compared to monoclonal tumors.



AACR DISTINGUISHED LECTURESHIP ON THE SCIENCE OF CANCER HEALTH DISPARITIES

Folakemi T. Odedina, PhD

Professor, Division of Hematology/Oncology Enterprise Deputy Director, Community Outreach & Engagement, Co-Director, Center for Health Equity and Community Engagement Research (CHCR) Director, CHCR Global Health Equity Initiatives Mayo Clinic, Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center Jacksonville, FL

For seminal research in understanding and implementing community-based behavioral interventions to improve the health of minority populations, her dedication to facilitating and promoting clinical trial participation among underserved and underrepresented populations, and her leadership in training the next generation of health equity scientists.



AACR JAMES S. EWING-THELMA B. DUNN AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN PATHOLOGY IN CANCER RESEARCH

Christopher D.M. Fletcher, MD

Professor of Pathology Harvard Medical School; Emeritus Chief of Onco-Pathology Dana-Farber Cancer Institute; Emeritus Vice Chair of Anatomic Pathology Brigham and Women's Hospital Boston, MA

For breakthrough discoveries that have led to the molecular characterization of soft tissue tumors, and for transforming the cancer pathology field by providing expert insights into tumor diagnosis and clinical prognosis. Dr. Fletcher was the first to integrate morphological aspects of soft tissues with the characterization of genetic insults leading to the definition of over 40 distinct molecular and morphological characteristics capable of classifying mesenchymal neoplasms. These categorized molecular signatures have since contributed to the establishment of innovative therapies for cancer patients worldwide.



AACR MARGARET FOTI AWARD FOR LEADERSHIP AND EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENTS IN CANCER RESEARCH

Chi Van Dang, MD, PhD, FAACR

Scientific Director, Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of Cancer Medicine Professor of Oncology Professor of Cell Biology Professor of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine Baltimore, MD

For seminal contributions to elucidating the function of the MYC oncogene in regulating anabolic metabolism necessary for cell growth and proliferation. He is celebrated as the first scientist to conceptualize and demonstrate that genetic alterations in key oncogenes can lead to tumor metabolism reprogramming, which subsequently led to efforts to target cancer metabolism as a viable cancer therapeutic option. His discoveries have significantly impacted the acceleration of progress in cancer research, and his leadership and commitment to mentorship have fostered the careers of countless early-stage investigators in the cancer biology and metabolism fields.



AACR OUTSTANDING INVESTIGATOR AWARD FOR BREAST CANCER RESEARCH

AWARD SUPPORTED BY BREAST CANCER RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Alana L. Welm, PhD

Senior Director of Basic Science Professor, Department of Oncological Sciences Ralph E. and Willia T. Main Presidential Endowed Chair in Cancer Research Huntsman Cancer Institute, University of Utah Salt Lake City, UT

For developing innovative breast cancer tumor models that accurately recapitulate breast cancer metastasis and tumor response. Through her collection of 180 paired patient-derived xenografts (PDX) and PDX-derived organoids (PDxO), Dr. Welm has elegantly demonstrated that these models allow for the investigation of how human breast tumors metastasize and can also be exploited to predict the risk of recurrence for patients with triple negative breast cancer. These models are now used to enhance drug screening of patients' tumors providing an unprecedented resource for personalized medicine. Additionally, Dr. Welm has discovered the tyrosine kinase RON as a crucial contributor to breast cancer.



AACR TEAM SCIENCE AWARD

AWARD SUPPORTED BY LOXO@LILLY

Team Womb, Manchester Academic Health Science Centre

TEAM LEADER

Emma Crosbie, BSC, PhD

National Institute for Health and Care Research Advanced Fellow, Professor and Honorary Consultant in Gynaecological Oncology Division of Cancer Sciences; Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health University of Manchester, England United Kingdom

TEAM MEMBERS

James Bolton, MA, BMBCh Raymond McMahon, MBBCh, Katherine Payne, BPharm, BAO, BSc, MD MSc. PhD D. Gareth Evans. MBBS. MD Rhona McVey, BSc, MBChB Louise Gorman, MSc, PhD Nadira Narine, MSc

Durgesh N. Rana, MBBS, MD Neil Ryan, MBChB, PhD

For significant collaborative contributions to deciphering the molecular basis of Lynch syndrome-associated endometrial cancer. As an interdisciplinary team of academics and healthcare professionals from across the medical, oncology, pathology, health economics and behavioral science fields, Team Womb has demonstrated that 3% of endometrial cancers are caused by Lynch syndrome. The team has also brilliantly demonstrated that immunohistochemistry-based approaches to detecting DNA mismatch repair protein deficiencies represents a cost-effective method for detecting Lynch syndrome, work that has led to fundamental changes to endometrial cancer prevention strategies and clinical practice guidelines.



AACR-AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY AWARD FOR **RESEARCH EXCELLENCE IN CANCER** EPIDEMIOLOGY AND PREVENTION AWARD SUPPORTED BY THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY

Timothy R. Rebbeck, PhD, FAACR

Vincent L. Gregory, Jr. Professor of Cancer Prevention Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute Boston, MA

For groundbreaking contributions to optimizing standards of cancer prevention in clinical practice and reducing cancer mortality by characterizing the role of BRCA1/2 mutations in high-risk breast and ovarian cancer populations and quantifying prostate cancer risk in the global African Diaspora using clinical patient data, conglomerate genotypes, and tumor biomarkers.



AACR-CANCER RESEARCH INSTITUTE LLOYD J. OLD AWARD IN CANCER IMMUNOLOGY AWARD SUPPORTED BY CANCER RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Gordon J. Freeman, PhD, FAACR

Professor of Medicine Department of Medical Oncology Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Harvard Medical School Boston, MA

For groundbreaking contributions to the discovery of the T-cell programmed death-1 receptor (PD-1) signaling pathway and the PD-1 ligands, PD-L1 and PD-L2; for spotlighting the involvement of this pathway in tumor evasion of immunosurveillance; and for demonstrating that blocking this pathway could provoke an antitumor immune response. This quintessential work has since led to the development of immunotherapies for cancer, autoimmune diseases, and transplant rejection.



AACR-G.H.A. CLOWES AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING BASIC CANCER RESEARCH AWARD SUPPORTED BY LOXO@LILLY

David Pellman, MD, FAACR

Margaret M. Dyson Chair in Pediatric Oncology Dana-Farber Cancer Institute Professor, Department of Cell Biology and Pediatrics Harvard Medical School Investigator, Howard Hughes Medical Institute Associate Director for Basic Science Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center Boston, MA

For pioneering work dedicated to identifying the mechanisms responsible for inducing structural and numerical chromosome aberrations in cancer. Dr. Pellman has demonstrated through the development of brilliant murine models that whole genome duplication has the potential to accelerate somatic cancer evolution. This discovery and his demonstration that chromosome rearrangement may cause micronuclei formation resulting in chromothripsis has contributed to numerous subsequent studies dedicated to understanding the relationship between genome stability and cancer.



AACR-IRVING WEINSTEIN FOUNDATION DISTINGUISHED LECTURESHIP AWARD SUPPORTED BY IRVING WEINSTEIN FOUNDATION

Rafi Ahmed, PhD

Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology Eminent Scholar, Georgia Research Alliance Investigator, Emory Center for AIDS Research Vaccine Center Director Emory University Atlanta, GA

For unparalleled scientific contributions to immunology and vaccinology including the elucidation of the molecular mechanisms of T-cell exhaustion and T-cell memory formation and differentiation following antigen exposure. He is also being honored for his seminal demonstration that persistent viral exposure can result in PD-1mediated T-cell exhaustion, and that anti-PD-1 antibodies are able to rescue normal T-cell function. His pioneering research has since been expanded to countless studies within the cancer research field dedicated to determining the cellular mechanisms by which T cells function, which has served as a vital catalyst to the ongoing emergence of immune-based therapies for the treatment of patients with cancer and various chronic diseases worldwide.



AACR-JOSEPH H. BURCHENAL AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN CLINICAL CANCER RESEARCH AWARD SUPPORTED BY BRISTOL-MYERS SQUIBB

Joseph A. Sparano, MD

Ezra M. Greenspan M.D. Professor in Clinical Cancer Therapeutics Chief, Division of Hematology/Oncology, Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai Deputy Director, Tisch Cancer Institute Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai New York, NY

For illuminating clinical cancer research dedicated to improving therapeutic options for the treatment of breast cancer and HIV-associated cancers. Dr. Sparano led the landmark TAILORx clinical trial that transformed the standard of care for women with early-stage ER-Positive, HER-2 Negative, node negative breast cancer, resulting in chemotherapy usage guided by the 21-gene Oncotype DX recurrence score and sparing patients from unnecessary chemotherapy regimens. Further, Dr. Sparano is recognized for characterizing factors that contribute to racial disparities in breast cancer and for establishing improved clinical treatment and surveillance protocols for black breast cancer patients.



AACR-MINORITIES IN CANCER RESEARCH JANE COOKE WRIGHT LECTURESHIP

Camille C. R. Ragin, PhD

Associate Director, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Professor, Cancer Prevention and Control Program Principal Investigator African Caribbean Cancer Consortium Fox Chase Cancer Center, Temple Health Temple University Philadelphia, PA

For unprecedented contributions to defining and understanding the genetic, molecular and environmental factors that contribute to cancer onset and progression in underrepresented patient populations. Dr. Ragin's elegant research has identified single nucleotide polymorphisms associated with altered expression of the DNA damage response gene, Polymerase β that affects chemotherapy and radiotherapy response in patients of African origin. In addition to these pioneering research accomplishments, she is celebrated for providing consistent mentorship to minority cancer researchers and for leading collaborative and global projects dedicated to cancer prevention.



AACR-PRINCESS TAKAMATSU MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP

AWARD SUPPORTED BY THE PRINCESS TAKAMATSU CANCER RESEARCH FUND

Tony Hunter, PhD, FAACR

American Cancer Society Professor Molecular and Cell Biology Laboratory Renato Dulbeccdo Chair Salk Institute for Biological Studies La Jolla, CA

For the seminal discovery of tyrosine kinases and tyrosine phosphorylation of proteins that have illuminated the fundamental processes of cellular signaling and have enabled the development of cancer therapeutics targeting kinases. His basic biomedical research targeting tyrosine kinases has since been successfully translated to over 40 tyrosine kinase inhibitors clinically approved to treat and manage a multitude of cancers. Further, Dr. Hunter is recognized for his tireless commitment to establishing and leading collaborations worldwide dedicated to deciphering the complexities of cancer onset and progression and improving cancer patient care.



AACR-ST. BALDRICK'S FOUNDATION AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN PEDIATRIC CANCER RESEARCH AWARD SUPPORTED BY THE ST. BALDRICK'S FOUNDATION

Ching-Hon Pui, MD

Co-Leader, Hematological Malignancies Program Director, China Region, St. Jude Global American Cancer Society Professor Fahad Nassar Al-Rashid Chair of Leukemia Research St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Memphis, TN

For revolutionizing the treatment of childhood acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) and co-founding international collaborative groups dedicated to improving ALL survivorship. Dr. Pui's clinical and translational research elegantly demonstrated that cranial irradiation, once a standard treatment for childhood high-risk ALL, may be safely omitted with consistent patient monitoring, in turn sparing patients from unnecessary radiation and improving overall quality of life. Notably, he has also spearheaded groundbreaking research dedicated to defining germline and somatic mutations in pediatric ALL, especially within patient populations in resource-limited countries.



AACR-WAUN KI HONG AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN TRANSLATIONAL AND CLINICAL CANCER RESEARCH AWARD SUPPORTED BY WAUN KI HONG FUND

Scott Kopetz, MD, PhD

Deputy Chair for Translational Research Professor, Department of Gastrointestinal Medical Oncology Leader, Department of Cancer Center Support Grant, GI Program TRACTION Medical Director, Division of Therapeutics Discovery Division Associate Vice President for Translational Integration The University of Texas, MD Anderson Cancer Center Houston, TX

For spearheading the development of novel therapies for patients with BRAFmutated metastatic colon cancer with poor prognosis. Dr. Kopetz brilliantly developed a clinical program to personalize therapeutic regimens based on genetic profiles ascertained from patient-derived xenografts models that would lead to the finding that KRAS/NRAS mutations can contribute to MAPK pathway inhibition resistance in BRAF mutant cancers. This discovery would result in the establishment of the vemurafenib, irinotecan and cetuximab (VIC) regimen as a standard of care for such patient populations.



AACR-WOMEN IN CANCER RESEARCH CHARLOTTE FRIEND LECTURESHIP

Elizabeth L. Travis, PhD

Associate Vice President Faculty Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Mattie Allen Fair Professor in Cancer Research Tenured Professor Department of Experimental Radiation Oncology Division of Radiation Oncology The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center Houston, TX

For lauded research contributions to defining the effects of radiation on normal tissues, which has resulted in the characterization of complications that may arise as a result of radiation therapy and has helped guide the improvement of radiation therapy usage to improve cancer patient outcomes. Dr. Travis is also recognized for her steadfast dedication to the advancement of women in science through her leadership in serving as an advocate for women cancer researchers and for championing the recruitment and retainment of women and minority cancer researchers.



PEZCOLLER FOUNDATION-AACR INTERNATIONAL AWARD FOR EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENT IN CANCER RESEARCH AWARD SUPPORTED BY THE PEZCOLLER FOUNDATION

Titia de Lange, PhD, FAACR

Director, Anderson Center for Cancer Research Leon Hess Professor The Rockefeller University New York, NY

For the groundbreaking discovery of the molecular mechanisms by which telomeres protect chromosome ends, for the identification of the shelterin protein complex, and for demonstrating how loss of telomere protection results in aberrant genomic integrity and tumorigenesis. Dr. de Lange's research has proven to be invaluable in the field of telomere research and has led to a greater understanding of cancer development as well as genome maintenance.



AACR DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

Worta McCaskill-Stevens, MD

Former Chief, National Cancer Institute Community Oncology and Prevention Trials Research Group Former Director, National Cancer Institute Community Oncology Research Program Bethesda, MD

For enormous contributions to cancer research and, most notably, cancer disparities research and cancer health equity. Dr. McCaskill-Stevens was an unparalleled leader of the NCI Community Oncology Research Program (NCORP), and through NCORP she conducted valuable clinical trials in community hospitals and practices across the country, delivering much needed care to vulnerable patient populations. She spearheaded the inclusion and support of underserved cancer patients into cutting edge clinical trials and devoted herself to mentoring hundreds of students and early-stage investigators who are now continuing her legacy in the cancer research community.



AACR DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN CANCER RESEARCH

Franco Cavalli, MD

Scientific Director, Oncology Institute of Southern Switzerland Professor of Medical Oncology, Bern University Chair, International Extranodal Lymphoma Study Group Organizer, International Conference on Malignant Lymphoma President, European School of Oncology Scientific Committee President, World Oncology Forum Bellinzona, Switzerland

For longstanding scientific accomplishments in the breast cancer, leukemia, and lymphoma field. Dr. Cavalli's brilliant clinical investigations involving VP-16 paved the way for cancer treatments, while his collective scientific contributions have led the development of multiple therapeutics including, cisplatin, carboplatin, and paclitaxel. Additionally, his leadership has been pivotal to improving global cancer care and to establishing several initiatives and organizations that continue to propel the cancer research field forward.



AACR JUNE L. BIEDLER PRIZE FOR CANCER JOURNALISM MAGAZINE CATEGORY

Beth Howard, BA, MS

Journalist *Prevention* Magazine Charlotte, NC

"Cervical Cancer Still Kills Thousands of Women"



AACR JUNE L. BIEDLER PRIZE FOR CANCER JOURNALISM **NEWSPAPER CATEGORY**

Hellen Shikanda, BS

Health and Science Reporter Daily Nation (Kenya) Nairobi, Kenya, Africa

"New Drug Promises Better Treatment for Cancer Patients"



AACR JUNE L. BIEDLER PRIZE FOR CANCER JOURNALISM **ONLINE/MULTIMEDIA CATEGORY**

Rosa Furneaux BA, MJ

Investigative Global Health Reporter The Bureau of Investigative Journalism UK London, England, United Kingdom

"The Drug was Meant to Save Childrens' Lives. Instead, They're Dying"

Laura Margottini, MSc

Investigative Science Journalist The Bureau of Investigative Journalism Ficulle TR, Italy

"The Drug was Meant to Save Childrens' Lives. Instead, They're Dying"



AACR JUNE L. BIEDLER PRIZE FOR CANCER JOURNALISM TELEVISION/RADIO/PODCAST CATEGORY

Leigh Ann Winick, MS

Medical Producer CBS National News/CBS Mornings New York, NY

"New Policy May Limit Breast Cancer Coverage"

Anna Werner, BA

Consumer Investigative Correspondent CBS National News/CBS Mornings New York, NY

"New Policy May Limit Breast Cancer Coverage"



AACR JUNE L. BIEDLER PRIZE FOR CANCER JOURNALISM TELEVISION/RADIO/PODCAST CATEGORY

Nell Greenfieldboyce, MA

Correspondent, Science Desk National Public Radio (NPR) Washington, DC

"A New Kind of Blood Test Can Screen for Many Cancers—As Some Pregnant People Learn" and "Testing Your Genes for Cancer Risk is Way Cheaper Now—And it Could Save Your Life"

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