



RESEARCH!AMERICA TO HONOR PUBLIC HEALTH LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION IN OUR NATION'S RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC

Outstanding Achievement in Public Health Awards To Be Presented

Thursday, February 4, 2021

Individuals, organizations, and partnerships contributing in profoundly important ways to combating COVID-19 will be honored by Research!America at an online event on April 14, 2021. The [Outstanding Achievement in Public Health Awards](#), a new addition to Research!America's annual awards program, provide an opportunity to showcase the significance of our nation's science and public health ecosystem and express gratitude to those who have devoted their extraordinary ingenuity, expertise, and resolve to the COVID-19 response.



An individual whose humility, candor and courageous navigation of uncharted waters gave Americans a north star in the midst of this brutal and dispiriting crisis; a task force in Michigan that has dramatically reduced the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 on communities of color; a coronavirus resource center at Johns Hopkins University and Medicine that is informing the response to COVID-19 in the U.S. and globally; and a public-private collaboration that deployed cutting-edge science to give the world a desperately needed vaccine will be among those recognized at Research!America's Advocacy

Awards ceremony.

"These honorees have impacted our nation's health and well-being in profound ways, and it is a privilege to salute them," said Mary Woolley, president and CEO of Research!America. "By focusing on research and development, public health information, racial disparities, and science communication, our awardees are making game-changing contributions benefitting all of us."

The award categories and honorees are:

The **BUILDING THE FOUNDATION AWARD**, recognizing individuals whose basic research discoveries played a pivotal role in the response to COVID-19, will be awarded to **Katalin Karikó, PhD**, a Senior Vice President of BioNTech, and **Drew Weissman, MD, PhD**, Director of Vaccine Research and Professor of Medicine, Infectious Diseases Division, University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine. Their research using mRNA to fight disease is core to the mRNA technology used in the first two COVID-19 vaccines to be authorized. Prior to this research, synthetic mRNA had been difficult to implement in the treatment of disease, as it often triggered a strong inflammatory response.

The **RAPID TRANSLATION AWARD** honors two public-private partnerships in the fight

against COVID-19. The **National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases** and **Moderna** joined forces to develop one of the first-authorized COVID-19 vaccines. With strict criteria for clinical trial diversity and expeditious production, the trials began a mere 63 days after sequence selection. The resulting vaccine has a 94% efficacy rate.

Moncef Slaoui, PhD, a partner at Medicxi Ventures, will also be honored for his role serving as the Chief Scientific Advisor of Operation Warp Speed. Leveraging scientific innovation while upholding safety standards for the swift development of several vaccines, Operation Warp Speed led cooperation and collaboration between governmental agencies to support the efforts of pharmaceutical companies, academia, and research organizations, setting a precedent for future large-scale, public-private partnerships.

The **MEETING THE MOMENT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AWARD** will honor two initiatives that have been instrumental in preparing first responders to meet the challenges of combating COVID-19. **Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center** will be honored as the leading, authoritative source for global COVID-19 epidemiological data for public health policymakers and major news outlets around the world. The Coronavirus Resource Center's work has been crucial in informing modeling efforts and control measures. By democratizing critical information, the team at Johns Hopkins has greatly expanded the usability and application of data.

Created by the Governor of Michigan, Gretchen Whitmer, and led by Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist, the **Michigan COVID-19 Task Force on Racial Disparities** addresses the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color. The Task Force studied the causes of racial disparities and recommended actions that sought to reduce the number of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths by expanding testing and providing crucial support to community organizations. Officials report that the average number of new COVID cases reported per million residents per day for Black Michiganders dropped from 176 at the outset of the pandemic to 59 in the fall of 2020. During the same time period, the number of "probable" COVID deaths recorded per million Black Michiganders per day decreased from 21.7 to 1.

The **CLEAR VOICE AWARD** will honor two individuals whose effective communication of important health and science information to the public contributed to the fight against COVID-19. **Anne Schuchat, MD (RADM, USPHS, RET)**, the Principal Deputy Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), helps to translate daily discoveries and concerns around the pandemic into a reliable, easy-to-understand narrative,

combining her own voice with that of the CDC's scientific communication efforts. Dr. Schuchat's long-standing reputation as a master communicator includes roles during some of our country's greatest public health emergencies.

Michelle A. Williams, SM, ScD, Dean of the Faculty, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and Angelopoulos Professor in Public Health and International Development, is a leading figure and persuasive voice in the efforts to ensure COVID-19 vaccines are distributed equitably and that issues of vaccine hesitancy are adequately resolved. Dr. Williams champions the use of data to understand COVID-19, and her position as Dean provides a perspective on the impact of COVID-19 on higher education. She has worked to ensure that the inequitable impact of COVID-19 on communities of color remains a central concern in the conversation about our nation's response.

Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) since 1984, will be honored at Research!America's Advocacy Awards ceremony for his continued leadership in service to our nation with the **OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN PUBLIC HEALTH AWARD**. His command of the institute that oversees the nation's response to infectious disease crises including HIV/AIDS, Ebola, Zika, and now COVID-19, his relatability to non-scientists, and his resolute professionalism continue to be greatly appreciated and needed.

The Honorable Michael N. Castle, Chair of Research!America's Board of Directors, added, "Through the darkness that the pandemic brought around the world, these awardees represent a bright light, not only because of their accomplishments and perseverance but also because they instill the hope we all so desperately need at this moment."

The virtual event on April 14, 2021, marks the 25th anniversary of the Research!America Advocacy Awards. With last year's presentation postponed because of the pandemic, the 2020 Advocacy Awardees will be recognized at the April event. Read more about these extraordinary individuals and organizations [here](#).

Also as part of the award ceremony, Research!America will present the 2021 *Whitehead Award*, named in honor of Research!America founder Edwin C. "Jack" Whitehead. The *Whitehead Award* recognizes exemplary leaders, particularly those in public office, who have demonstrated a deep commitment to advancing medical and health research as a national priority and who galvanize others in support of science. These awardees will be announced in the coming weeks.

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The Research!America alliance advocates for science, discovery, and innovation to achieve better health for all. Visit www.researchamerica.org.

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[Terri Schwartzbeck](#)
Director of Communications
571-482-2719

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241 18TH STREET SOUTH, SUITE 501
ARLINGTON, VA 22202

(PHONE) 703-739-2577
(FAX) 703-739-2372
INFO@RESEARCHAMERICA.ORG

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