



Research!America Advocacy Awards to Recognize Nation's Outstanding Leaders for Medical and Health Research

ARLINGTON, VA Oct. 15, 2024 -- Research!America is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2025 Advocacy Awards. Given annually since 1996, the Advocacy Awards recognize individuals and organizations whose leadership efforts have advanced the nation's commitment to medical and health research.

Research!America will formally present the awards during an event at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. on March 12, 2025.

"Our honorees collectively represent a stellar group of remarkable leaders who – through their innovation, dedication, resilience, and creativity – have advanced our nation's commitment to research with the overriding goal of healthier lives for all Americans," said Research!America President and CEO Mary Woolley. "In a variety of impactful ways, our honorees have raised awareness and support for medical and health research in our country and around the world. We know they will inspire others to become ever more impactful advocates."

Our distinguished awardees announced today:

- **[Carolyn Clancy, MD](#)**, Assistant Under Secretary for Health (AUSH) for [Discovery, Education and Affiliate Networks, Veterans Health Administration](#) (VHA), will receive the ***John Edward Porter Legacy Award***. ***The award, generously supported by the late Ann Lurie***, recognizes individuals who show outstanding commitment to sustaining the nation's world-class leadership in medical and health care research. Throughout her federal career and service at both the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Dr. Clancy has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to advancing medical and public health progress and has invigorated federal health research overall. In her current role at VA, Dr. Clancy oversees the department's diverse portfolio of biomedical, clinical, health services, and rehabilitative research. Prior to the VA, as Director of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), she further strengthened AHRQ's role in federal health care, and funding for the agency was greatly increased. At both departments, her efforts have spurred

tremendous progress in women's health care, and she has worked tirelessly at VA to increase women Veterans' participation in clinical trials.

- **Gary H. Gibbons, MD**, Director, [National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute \(NHLBI\)](#) will receive the **Builders of Science Award**, which recognizes distinguished scientists who provide inspiration and determination for building or re-building an outstanding home for research. Dr. Gibbons was founding director of the Cardiovascular Research Institute (CVRI) at the Morehouse School of Medicine, positioning CVRI as a national leader in pioneering innovations to improve cardiovascular health in underserved populations. As Director of NHLBI, he has enhanced, expanded, and accelerated the transformative research of this premier Institute in cross-cutting sectors including data science, community-engaged research, women's health, climate and health, and the translation of scientific discoveries in heart, lung, blood, and sleep into better health and health care for all people across our nation and around the world. He has received numerous honors including the 2021 Service to America Medal for his visionary leadership of the National Institutes of Health Community Engagement Alliance (CEAL), a vibrant research ecosystem in which communities are equal partners in co-designing research that identifies and implements solutions for their most pressing health challenges.
- **Gary K. Michelson, MD**, Founder, President, and Co-chair, [Michelson Philanthropies & Michelson Medical Research Foundation](#), will receive the **Gordon and Llura Gund Leadership Award**, which honors volunteer leaders whose significant contributions have made an extraordinary impact on the level of advocacy for medical, public health, or other health-related research in their communities or on the state or national level. A prolific inventor and philanthropist, Dr. Michelson is having a lasting impact on medical research. He has been a leading advocate for increasing the annual budget of the NIH and other research agencies, efforts that contributed to a multi-billion increase in NIH funding and the establishment of ARPA-H. He successfully advocated for a \$500 million appropriation by the state of California to establish the California Institute for Immunology and Immunotherapy, which aims to be the world's leading center for harnessing the human immune system to develop next-generation vaccines and therapies to prevent, treat, and cure cancer, infectious, and chronic diseases.
- **Barbara E. Bierer, MD**, Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School, and Faculty Director of the [Multi-Regional Clinical Trials Center of Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard \(MRCT Center\)](#), will receive the **Herbert Pardes Family Award for National Leadership in Advocacy for Research**. This award recognizes individuals who, like the late Dr. Pardes, have demonstrated distinguished academic leadership and sustained commitment to public engagement and advocacy for research. Dr. Bierer's leadership and commitment to research advocacy worldwide has been demonstrated by her roles in founding and directing the MRCT Center, a collaborative effort to improve standards for design, ethics, and conduct of international clinical trials. She also co-founded Vivli, a center for global clinical trial data sharing and the COVID-19 Collaboration Platform.

Domestically, she developed and now directs SMART IRB, a national platform that permits single ethics review for multi-site trials. She previously established the Brigham Research Institute and the Innovation Hub, a focus for entrepreneurship and innovation at Brigham and Women's Hospital, among other efforts to advance research and support the research community.

- **Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA)**, will receive the ***Paul G. Rogers Distinguished Organization Advocacy Award***. **Donald S. Wood, PhD, President and Chief Executive Officer** of the Muscular Dystrophy Association, will accept on behalf of his organization. For nearly 75 years, MDA has been at the forefront of unparalleled scientific breakthroughs, pioneering research into more than 300 neuromuscular diseases. As the No. 1 voluntary health organization in the U.S. dedicated to empowering the lives of people living with neuromuscular diseases, MDA has funded groundbreaking research, advocated for life-changing policies, and empowered families with essential care and resources. MDA's legacy of driving innovation and progress includes establishing a national network of specialized treatment centers and delivering top-tier care to patients across the country. Its commitment to education has also extended to professionals and communities, ensuring that the latest advancements in treatment and care are accessible to all. With a mission to empower families to live longer, more independent lives, MDA continues to build on its legacy, propelling the field of neuromuscular research and care forward and solidifying its role as a leader in advocacy and patient empowerment.
- **Elizabeth Cohen**, Freelance Health Reporter, will receive the ***Isadore Rosenfeld Award for Impact on Public Opinion***, which is presented annually to a news media representative or other influential individual who has been extraordinarily effective in delivering medical, public health, or other health-related research advocacy messages to the public. Cohen has exemplified excellence in coverage and portrayal of many health issues, including mental health, weaknesses in medical infrastructure, clinical trials and other research findings, patients in need of treatment, the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccinations, gun violence, and much more. She is passionate about helping doctors, patients, and their families navigate our imperfect medical system, and has shown people how to be their own advocate and navigate a complex health-care system through her CNN column and subsequent book "The Empowered Patient."

We are also pleased to announce the honorees of the ***Outstanding Achievement in Public Health Awards generously supported by Johnson & Johnson***. These awards celebrate and champion the role individuals and organizations play through research, communication, and public-private partnerships in confronting public health threats that jeopardize our security, prosperity, and well-being.

- [Monica M. Bertagnolli, MD](#), Director, [National Institutes of Health](#), will receive the ***Meeting the Moment for Public Health Award***, which recognizes an individual or organization that has been a “clear voice,” playing a key role in communicating important public health information to the public and rising to the challenge of the day. Dr. Bertagnolli is a public health leader who helps define and shape public health solutions for the American people by actively listening to concerns and effectively communicating a vision. In her short time as head of the NIH, she has worked to rebuild bridges between lawmakers, the public, and the NIH after the trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Bertagnolli also served as Director of the National Cancer Institute where she initiated and expanded clinical trials so more people could participate.
- [Alfred Sommer, MD, MHS](#), Dean Emeritus, University Distinguished Service Professor, Professor Emeritus, [Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health](#), will receive the ***Outstanding Achievement in Public Health Award***. This award recognizes an individual for their extraordinary work and enormous contributions to public health. Dr. Sommer’s advocacy began early in his storied career. In the 1970s and 1980s, he demonstrated that Vitamin A supplements significantly reduce childhood mortality rates for common infections. Under his leadership at Johns Hopkins, the Bloomberg School of Public Health has repeatedly been ranked the No. 1 School of Public Health in the country by U.S. News and World Report. Throughout the years, he has been a tireless advocate for improving public health by promoting adoption of medical discoveries into clinical medicine and public health practice.
- [Barney S. Graham, MD, PhD](#) and [Kizzmekia S. Corbett-Helaire, PhD](#) are recipients of ***Building the Foundation Award***. This award recognizes one or more individuals whose basic research discoveries have played a pivotal role in advancing public health. Dr. Graham and Dr. Corbett-Helaire’s years of research on the fundamental biology of coronaviruses led to development of COVID-19 vaccines. They were among the researchers named Heroes of the Year by Time Magazine in 2021. For decades, Dr. Graham researched respiratory syncytial virus (RSV); his work on RSV led to recent FDA-approved vaccines and spearheaded understanding on how to design effective vaccines for other viruses, such as coronaviruses. Dr. Corbett-Helaire joined his NIH laboratory in 2014 to co-lead a team tasked with understanding immune responses to coronaviruses. Her work highlighted how to use coronavirus spike proteins to generate high level immune responses. On the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, together they co-designed and developed a leading COVID-19 vaccine, Moderna’s “SpikeVax,” which unprecedentedly entered clinical trial in only 66 days from viral sequence release. Aside from SpikeVax, their design is included in many vaccines used globally, including Pfizer’s, Novavax’s, and even nasal COVID-19 vaccines currently in development. To tackle the COVID-19 virus therapeutically, they also isolated therapeutic monoclonal antibodies, which, upon development by Eli Lilly, were used globally against many variants. **Graham** is currently Director of the [David Satcher Global](#)

[Health Equity Institute](#) and Professor of Medicine and Microbiology, Biochemistry, and Immunology, Morehouse School of Medicine. **Corbett-Helaire** is currently Assistant Professor of Immunology and Infectious Diseases at [Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#) and Howard Hughes Medical Institute Freeman Hrabowski Scholar.

- **[Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative \(DNDi\)](#)** will be recognized with the ***Rapid Translation Award***. This award honors a public-private partnership that has made a critical contribution to public health progress in a timely way. [Delali Attiogbe Attipoe](#), North America Executive Director, will accept on the organization's behalf. DNDi has been pivotal in addressing unmet public health needs in developing countries, and in increasingly developed countries where neglected tropical diseases have appeared recently. DNDi has leveraged public-private partnerships to accelerate drug development for diseases that primarily affect poor and marginalized people and have not been a major focus of R&D, diseases such as sleeping sickness, Chagas disease, malaria, and eumycetoma.

The honorees of the ***Edwin C. Whitehead Award for Medical Research Advocacy*** will be announced early next year. This 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.

For more information about the 2025 Advocacy Awards, including bios of each honoree and details about the various awards, visit our [Advocacy Awards web page](#).

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About Research!America

Research!America is a nonprofit medical and health research advocacy alliance which advocates for science, discovery, and innovation to achieve better health for all. Visit

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