

# American Federation for **Aging** Research

Fall 2004

## AFAR Elects Kalman New Board Chair



Diana Jacobs Kalman, AFAR board member since 1994, was elected chair of the board of directors at its December 2003 meeting. “AFAR is extremely pleased to have Diana Kalman at the helm,” said Stephanie Lederman, AFAR’s executive director. “Her talent and long experience in the communications field will serve not only AFAR, but the broader effort to build awareness about the need to secure more funding for biomedical research in aging.”

Ms. Kalman has served on the board in a variety of capacities, most recently as vice chair and chair of

its geographic expansion committee. She is a strong proponent of AFAR’s goals and is excited about her new role in helping to advance the organization. “Given the fact that we now live longer, it is critical that the scientific advancement of healthier aging continue to develop and receive support,” notes Ms. Kalman.

“AFAR’s ability to identify new investigators with a strong interest in aging research is demonstrated by the fact that 85% of AFAR’s research grant recipients continue to pursue research in aging. Well over half of these researchers continue their work begun under their AFAR grant. That’s a very laudable accomplishment,” she added.

These scientists are hard at work at more than 100 of the nation’s best academic institutions, serving in leadership positions. “I feel privileged, as AFAR’s chair, to be part of a growing team that works to translate the hope of talented individuals into reality.” ●

## New Partnership Strengthens Beeson Award

The Paul Beeson Physician Faculty Scholars in Aging Research Program has been AFAR’s flagship grant program, funding 10 to 11 physician-scientists annually at the generous sum of \$450,000 over three years. During the last decade, the Beeson award has been instrumental in helping talented young scientists successfully make the difficult transition to independent investigator. Until recently, the award was supported entirely with private funding. Now, AFAR is pleased to announce that the program’s funders—The John A. Hartford Foundation, The Atlantic Philanthropies, and The Starr Foundation—have partnered with the National Institute on Aging (NIA) and put the Beeson program on solid footing in its second decade.

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## Letter from the Executive Director

**A lack of funding for the nation's young scientists is causing many of them to leave academia, according to a recent *Wall Street Journal* article. Federal funding is drying up—in 2001, only 4% of NIH grants were awarded to researchers under the age of 35—and researchers with innovative ideas are being left behind. This will have a substantial impact on the future of biomedical research.**

The American Federation for Aging Research (AFAR) is one of the nation's leading supporters for biomedical research in aging and we have supported and continue to support the brightest researchers in the early stages of their careers. These scientists are working to understand the basic biology of aging and diseases associated with aging such as Alzheimer's disease, cancer, diabetes and heart disease. Through our various programs, we have distributed nearly \$80 million to more than 2,000 new investigators and students.

The ultimate goal of this research is to discover ways to understand the aging process and delay the multiple illnesses that afflict many of us in the last decades of life.

During the last 20 years, this research has yielded substantial breakthroughs. In laboratory animals, we have discovered ways to slow the development and progression of cancer, osteoporosis, heart disease, and other age-related diseases through interventions like caloric restriction and genetic modification which affect changes in the rate of aging.

Scientists continue to broaden, adapt, and apply this knowledge to humans. At AFAR, we believe that this basic research into the mechanisms of how and why we age is the starting point, not only for increasing our lifespan, but to understand and find the cures for leading causes of death and disability in the older population.

AFAR's support is crucial. Just 0.67% of the National Institutes of Health's budget is currently devoted to research in the biology of aging. We encourage the public and private sectors to help increase funding in this important area. ●



Stephanie Lederman

## American Federation for Aging Research

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## Dr. David Morgan: Helping Younger Scientists and Older Adults

David Morgan, Ph.D., professor of pharmacology and therapeutics at the University of South Florida, has been a member of AFAR's premier review panel. His motivation for volunteering to help choose the next generation of aging researchers stems not only from gratitude for a previous AFAR grant, but also from a sense of fairness.

"The American system means opportunity for everyone," Dr. Morgan says. "For science to reflect that, we need people willing to help with grant evaluation and consider all applicants equally. Otherwise, the funding process becomes dominated by big institutions."

Reviewing grants as a member of the AFAR research committee, Dr. Morgan considers not only applicants' technical skills, but also the content of the proposed research.

"I ask myself, if this research is successful, will we gain greater insight into the mechanisms of aging?" he explains. He is willing, even eager, to consider applicants whose research lies off the beaten path or challenges the status quo. "Science," he says, "is inherently revolutionary."

With these grants, AFAR plays a large role in helping new investigators with innovative ideas jump-start their careers, says Dr. Morgan. Postdoctoral fellows and junior faculty need support as they leave a mentor's laboratory and begin efforts to set up their own research programs. AFAR's grants can give them the time and resources they need to gather pilot data, which are critical for a successful NIH grant application.

When not reviewing grants, Dr. Morgan is hard at work at the University of South Florida's Alzheimer's Research Laboratory, which he directs. The goal of the laboratory is to develop therapies that could delay or even prevent Alzheimer's disease. The lab's primary tool is a transgenic mouse, genetically modified to mimic the symptoms of Alzheimer's. Dr. Morgan is currently testing numerous pharmaceutical agents on the mice, hoping to discover one or several that might modify the accumulation of beta-amyloid,

the substance that clumps into plaques in the brains of Alzheimer's patients.

Among his particular interests are non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, which are associated with a reduced risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. Because NSAIDs can have severe side effects, Dr. Morgan is testing several modified versions in the hope they will retain their beneficial effects with reduced toxicity. He is also working to determine the role inflammation plays in the brain by observing how cells react to different types and levels of inflammation. The goal, says Dr. Morgan, "is to help

people maintain optimal brain function into older adulthood." Other areas he is exploring include the development of vaccines to combat beta-amyloid buildup, and determining whether certain foods, such as blueberries, have

beneficial effects on cognitive function.

Although Dr. Morgan's research concentrates on a specific disease, he applauds AFAR's efforts to emphasize all research that can illuminate the mechanisms of aging. "The biggest risk factor for age-related diseases is too many birthdays," he notes. "We need to understand aging to delay these diseases and ensure health for older people." ●



Dr. David Morgan

## New Partnership Strengthens Beeson Award

continued from page 1

This unique public-private partnership represents a step forward for both the program's private funders and the NIA. The foundations were seeking additional partners to leverage their investment in the Beeson award. The NIA, impressed by Beeson recipients' success in receiving federal and extramural support, was very interested in joining the partnership.

After meetings between the NIA, AFAR, the Hartford Foundation, and Atlantic Philanthropies, the re-named Paul B. Beeson Career Development Awards in Aging Research program was established. "As dollars for research and training became tighter in this budget environment, we wanted to invest in a winner," said Judy Salerno, M.D., M.S., deputy director of the NIA. "The Beeson program has a proven track record."

### Beeson Scholars Gather at Annual Meeting

In June, some 100 scholars and leaders in geriatric medicine and aging attended the Annual Meeting of the Paul Beeson Physician Faculty Scholars in Aging Research at the Stein Eriksen Lodge in Park City, Utah. The meeting, a mélange of current and alumni Beeson Scholars, their mentors and other leaders in academic medicine and aging research, encourages dissemination of the Scholars' findings and enhances the development of scholarship and leadership. In an effort to build a sense of community and common purpose among Beeson Scholars, a planning committee made up of Beeson Scholars developed an agenda that Scholars from all disciplines could relate to. New Scholars introduced their projects as their graduating counterparts recapped their Beeson experience, analyzing the implications of their work in their specific area of research interest and the more general implications for aging research and the aging population. Yale University's Mary Tinetti, M.D., the chair of the program advisory committee, and Judith Salerno, M.D., M.S., from the National Institute on Aging, kicked off the conference with a discussion of the program changes and the role of the NIA as the new co-sponsor and co-administrator of the Beeson Program. Keynote speaker Judith Campisi, Ph.D., of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, discussed the relationship between tumor suppression mechanisms and aging, particularly the causes and consequences of cellular senescence, and sessions about career development techniques, such as obtaining federal funding and effectively advocating for aging research, were held by NIA representatives and Beeson alumni. The conference culminated with a forum on the topic of translation medicine and cardiovascular disease, featuring Beeson alumni as both the moderator and panelists. ●



Beeson mentor Seth Landefeld with 2001 Scholar Wes Ely and program committee member Linda Fried.



2001 Beeson Scholar Jay Edelberg, and 2003 Scholar Henry Paulson at the meeting poster session.

AFAR will continue to administer the award jointly with the NIA, and has also taken on responsibility for running the Beeson program's well-regarded annual meeting. "The annual meetings are where we sustain the cultural aspects of the Beeson program," says William Hazzard, M.D., former chair of the Beeson program committee. "AFAR intends to continue reinforcing that culture among the Beeson scholars."

The NIA's efforts to maintain the spirit and structure of the award have eased initial concerns that the new arrangement would hamper the program's ability to support unusual or risky research. "The NIA knows there is a need, and they know the program works," says Stephanie Lederman, executive director of AFAR. "They are doing what it takes to retain the integrity of the program."

With the additional resources of the NIA, Beeson awards have increased to \$600,000 to \$800,000 for three- to five-year awards. The financial support offered by the NIA, coupled with the Beeson's proven support structure and flexibility, should ensure that the program remains one of the most generous and prestigious sources of support for young investigators exploring crucial aspects of aging research. ●

## AFAR Holds Interdisciplinary Scholars Conference

In July, AFAR hosted the second annual AFAR/Hartford Interdisciplinary Scholars Conference at the Sutton Place Hotel in Chicago. The two-day meeting gathered 20 junior faculty scholars in medicine, nursing and social work supported by The John A. Hartford Foundation for a dynamic set of workshops, poster sessions and networking. Part of the broader AFAR/Hartford Communications & Dissemination Initiative, the conference was designed to build scholars' ability to present their research more effectively in a broad variety of settings.

Sessions on messaging, working with the media, effective posters and better PowerPoint presentations were facilitated by local communications experts including Valerie Denney, president of Valerie Denney Communications, and Thom Clark, executive director of the Community Media Workshop, as well as John

Beilenson of Strategic Communications & Planning, who directs the Communications & Dissemination Initiative on behalf of AFAR. Harold Pincus, professor and executive vice chairman of psychiatry, Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, also joined the meeting to present and run a workshop on communications issues in interdisciplinary research settings.

"Communications is a critical leadership skill," notes Jim O'Sullivan, program officer at The John A. Hartford Foundation. "This meeting has been an opportunity for talented junior faculty to come together in an interdisciplinary setting to strengthen their ability to translate their research and frame new ways to improve the health and well-being of the growing number of older adults." ●

## Infoaging: Your Resource for Research on Aging

- What are telomeres and why are they important?
- Does green tea prevent cancer?
- What is the latest research on osteoporosis?

Find the answers to these and more of your questions at [www.infoaging.org](http://www.infoaging.org). The site is updated regularly and features news from the field, research highlights and tips for healthy aging. ●

## AFAR to Host Great Expectations Awards Dinner

AFAR will be hosting its 2004 awards dinner on Monday, November 15, 2004 at New York City's Essex House. With the theme, **Great Expectations**, AFAR will honor Larry Ellison, CEO of the Oracle Corporation, John Trojanowski, M.D., Ph.D., director of the Institute on Aging at the University of Pennsylvania and Pfizer Inc

for their extraordinary contributions and long-time commitment to research about aging. Legendary singer Julie Wilson will perform and there will be a live auction of luxury items. For more information, contact the AFAR development office at 212-703-9977. ●

# Great Expectations

## AFAR Hosts Media Briefings on Osteoporosis and "Anti-Aging" Medicine

Earlier this year, AFAR hosted media briefings about osteoporosis, one of the most common age-related diseases affecting older Americans, and the hype and hope surrounding anti-aging medicine. Both briefings were held at the New York Academy of Sciences, and provided members of the media a unique opportunity to learn from experts in informal and personalized settings.

The osteoporosis briefing, held in March, was moderated by Jesse Roth, M.D., AFAR board member and geriatrician-in-chief of the North Shore-Long Island (New York) Jewish Health System, with a panel that included:

- Stuart Weierman, M.D., director of the Metabolic Bone Disease Program at North Shore-Long Island and assistant professor of medicine, New York University School of Medicine;
- Kenneth Lyles, M.D., director, Geriatric Evaluation and Management Center, VAMC/Durham and professor of medicine at Duke University School of Medicine;
- Douglas Kiel, M.D., director of medical research at the Hebrew Rehabilitation Center for the Aged in Boston and associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School; and
- Anne Kenny, M.D., Beeson Scholar and assistant professor at the Center on Aging, University of Connecticut Health Center.

These experts discussed new frontiers in osteoporosis treatment and prevention, as well as practical strategies for preventing falls and fractures.

*In Search of the Fountain of Health: Hype & Hope*, held in June, addressed whether the aging process can be stalled and what constitutes anti-aging medicine. Panelists explained the scientific advances of how and why we age while also addressing the social, ethical and medical implications of a burgeoning, multi-billion dollar anti-aging industry.

Moderated by *New York Times* science journalist, Gina Kolata, the program included a panel of renowned researchers in geriatric medicine that included:

- S. Jay Olshansky, Ph.D., professor, School of Public Health, University of Illinois at Chicago, senior research associate, Center on Aging, University of Chicago and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine;
- Leonard Hayflick, Ph.D., professor of anatomy, University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine; and
- Richard Miller, M.D., Ph.D., professor of pathology, associate director for research, Geriatrics Center, University of Michigan.

The event was co-sponsored by AFAR with the Gerontological Society of America and coincided with the release of GSA's two special issues on the topic published in the *Journal of Gerontology: Biological Sciences*.

Both media briefings were funded through a generous educational grant from Pfizer Inc.

For a full report of both events, please see the "Research Spotlight" section of the [www.infoaging.org](http://www.infoaging.org) web site. ●

## AFAR Welcomes Southeast Affiliate

On April 27, 2004, AFAR launched its southeast affiliate at Emory University in Atlanta, GA. The southeast affiliate joins the Rochester (NY) and Ohio affiliates as part of AFAR's geographical expansion efforts. The purpose of the affiliates is to increase AFAR's visibility on both

a local and national level, to raise funds to support AFAR, and to expand support for local researchers. For more information about the affiliate program, please contact Nancy O'Leary at [nancy@afar.org](mailto:nancy@afar.org). ●

## 2004 Grants Update

AFAR is pleased to announce that this year, 101 students and junior faculty from across the country have been awarded grants totaling \$6.1 million to advance the field of aging. We look forward to the results of their work and the contributions that these talented individuals make to this burgeoning field.

### Merck/AFAR Junior Investigator Awards in Geriatric Clinical Pharmacology

Appreciating the critical need for developing more physicians with a command of geriatric clinical pharmacology, the Merck Company Foundation and AFAR created the Merck/AFAR Junior Investigator Awards. Each investigator receives \$120,000 over two years.

**Oumitana Kajkenova, M.D.**  
University of Arkansas for Medical Science

**Josh Peterson, M.D., M.P.H.**  
Vanderbilt University

### AFAR Medical Student Geriatric Scholars Program

To encourage medical students—particularly budding researchers—to consider a career in academic geriatrics, these programs award short-term scholarships through a national competition. Each scholar receives a \$4,000 grant. The program is provided through support from The John A. Hartford Foundation, The Cleveland Foundation, Mt. Sinai Foundation of Cleveland, Cardinal Health Foundation and The Lillian R. Gleitsman/AFAR Medical Student Geriatric Scholars Program.

**Roshni Aggarwal**  
University of Michigan

**Yachna Ahuja**  
Case Western Reserve University

**Hannah Alphas**  
Johns Hopkins University

**Kathryn Artis**  
Mount Sinai School of Medicine

**Donald Banik**  
University of New England  
College of Medicine

**Aisha Baqai**  
Weill Medical College of Cornell  
University

**Russell Berger**  
Mount Sinai School of Medicine

**Gwen Bernacki**  
University of Buffalo-SUNY

**Laurel Blackman**  
UNTHSC-Texas College  
of Osteopathic Medicine

### Spotlight on Ohio: AFAR Medical Student Geriatric Scholars Program

Several members of AFAR's Ohio board of directors have successfully raised \$130,000 in grants for students at seven medical schools in Ohio. Their work is, in part, a response to the growing interest in AFAR's national medical student grant program, which received more than 150 applications this year from around the country.

The Ohio board, and in particular board chair Barbara Lach, and members Jerry Kowal, M.D., and Don Fanta, are working to create additional opportunities for medical students in Ohio to access funding that will enable them to gain exposure to and pursue study in the field of geriatrics. For Mrs. Lach, the appeal of the medical student grant program is that it enables AFAR to “start at a level at which students are still open to choosing disciplines and specialties, in the hope of encouraging them to make a career of geriatric medicine.”

Changing the negative view about the field of geriatrics among many medical students is a driving force behind

their fundraising efforts. “This program provides opportunities for students to have positive experiences in the field, gives them access to mentors, and helps in the development of new geriatric faculty,” says Dr. Kowal. He adds, “We need to ‘geriatricize’ physicians and provide them with positive aging perspectives.”

Three Ohio foundations agree. The Cleveland Foundation has already contributed \$50,000; Mt. Sinai Foundation of Cleveland has given \$30,000; and Cardinal Health Foundation in Columbus has donated \$50,000.

Building on these generous grants, the Medical Student program continues to seek additional monies. The group is gearing up to approach local corporations and family foundations for annual funding. Ultimately, they hope that other interested donors will continue to invest generously in the program, and the future of geriatric medicine. ●

**Brittany Bohinc**  
Northeastern Ohio University  
College of Medicine

**Yasmin Bootwala**  
Baylor College of Medicine

**Jody Brown**  
Case Western Reserve University

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of California, Los Angeles

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of Medicine

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Mount Sinai School of Medicine

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Case Western Reserve University

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Oklahoma State University

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Oklahoma State University

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**Pauline Wu**  
UMDNJ-School of Osteopathic  
Medicine

**Cecile Zhao**  
Medical College of Wisconsin

### The Glenn/AFAR Scholarships for Research in the Biology of Aging

Inaugurated in 1994, this scholarship program—designed to attract potential scientists and clinicians to aging research—provides Ph.D. and M.D. students the opportunity to conduct a three-month research project. Students work in an area of biomedical research in aging under the auspices of a mentor. Each scholarship carries an award of \$6,000.

**Ezana Azene**  
Johns Hopkins University

**Melynda Barnes**  
Mount Sinai School of Medicine

**Ala Berdichevsky**  
Massachusetts Institute  
of Technology

**Eric Hau-Yun Chang**  
New York University

**Robi Goswami**  
Duke University

**Jennifer Greenhall**  
University of California,  
San Diego

**Shilpa Iyer**  
University of Georgia

**William Ja**  
California Institute of Technology

**Young Mok Jang**  
University of Florida, Gainesville

**Jennifer Kwong**  
Weill Medical College  
of Cornell University

**Janelle Lauer-Fields**  
Florida Atlantic University

**Maria Lehtinen**  
Harvard University

**Jacqueline Maffucci**  
University of Texas at Austin

**Patrick McLaughlin**  
University of Washington

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Washington University

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**Lisa Whitson**  
University of Texas Health  
Science Center at San Antonio

**Brice Williams**  
Medical University of South  
Carolina

## Merck/AFAR Research Scholarships for Medical and Pharmacy Students in Geriatric Pharmacology

To develop a corps of physicians and pharmacists with an understanding of medication use in the elderly, the Merck Company Foundation and AFAR created the Merck/AFAR Research Scholarships in Geriatric Pharmacology. Through this program, medical and PharmD students have the opportunity to undertake a two- to three-month full-time research project in geriatric pharmacology. Each student receives a \$4,000 grant.

**Mary Jo Hessert**  
University of New England

**Patricia McHazzlett**  
Texas Tech Health Science Center

**Sarah Smith**  
University of California, Irvine

## AFAR Research Grants

AFAR provides up to 15 awards to junior faculty M.D. and Ph.Ds to do research that will serve as the basis for longer-term research efforts. AFAR-supported investigators study a broad range of biomedical and clinical topics with awards of \$60,000 for one- to two-years of research.

**Gal Bitan, Ph.D.**  
Brigham and Women's Hospital

**Heinrich Jasper, Ph.D.**  
University of Rochester Medical Center

**Bo-Chin Chiu, Ph.D.**  
University of Michigan

**Wolfgang Liedtke, M.D., Ph.D.**  
Duke University Medical Center

**Barbara McCreadie, Ph.D.**  
University of Michigan

**Michael Murphy, Ph.D.**  
Mayo Clinic Jacksonville

**Radhika Muzumdar, M.D.**  
Albert Einstein College of Medicine

**Peter Penzes, Ph.D.**  
Northwestern University

**Pere Puigserver, Ph.D.**  
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

**Patrick Sullivan, Ph.D.**  
Duke University Medical Center

**Kaoru Tominaga, Ph.D.**  
University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio

**Zoltan Ungvari, M.D., Ph.D.**  
New York Medical College

**David Zacks, M.D., Ph.D.**  
Kellogg Eye Center  
University of Michigan

## Pfizer/AFAR Innovations in Aging Research Program

This new program seeks to support M.D. and Ph.D investigators who are working in the basic biology of aging and in translational areas of aging research, focusing on four specific areas: cancer, cardiovascular disease, stroke and Alzheimer's disease. Up to six two-year grants of \$200,000 each are awarded.

**Zheng-Yi Chen, Ph.D.**  
Massachusetts General Hospital

**Jay Edelberg, M.D., Ph.D.**  
Weill Medical College of Cornell University

**Biao Zheng, M.D., Ph.D.**  
Baylor College of Medicine

## The Glenn/AFAR Research Grant Program for Postdoctoral Fellows

This program awards four grants of \$50,000 each to postdoctoral fellows to further research in the basic elements of aging.

**Paul Allen, Ph.D.**  
University of Rochester

**Johannes Bauer, Ph.D.**  
University of Connecticut Health Center

**Robert Dekroon, Ph.D.**  
Duke University Medical Center

**Rugang Zhang, Ph.D.**  
Fox Chase Cancer Center

## Ellison Medical Foundation/AFAR Senior Postdoctoral Research Program

This program encourages and furthers the careers of postdoctoral fellows (both M.D. and Ph.Ds) in the fundamental mechanisms of aging. Up to three two-year fellowships of \$100,000 are awarded annually.

**Shermali Gunawardena, Ph.D.**  
University of California, San Diego

**Jeong Hyeon Park, Ph.D.**  
The Rockefeller University

**Sarah Sagi, Ph.D.**  
University of California, San Diego

## Beeson Career Development Award

In collaboration with the NIA and several foundations, this program seeks to bolster the severe shortage of academic physicians who have the combination of medical, academic and scientific training to treat a growing older population. This program annually awards \$600,000 – \$800,000 over three to five years to up to 12 physician-scientists.

**Sandy Chang, M.D., Ph.D.**  
MD Anderson Cancer Center

**Cathleen Colon-Emeric, M.D.**  
Duke University Medical Center

**William Dale, M.D., Ph.D.**  
University of Chicago

**Lee Goldstein, M.D., Ph.D.**  
Harvard Medical School/Brigham and Women's Hospital

**Cary Gross, M.D.**  
Yale University

**John Lehman, M.D.**  
Washington University

**Andrew Lieberman, M.D., Ph.D.**  
University of Michigan

**Atul Malhotra, M.D., Ph.D.**  
Harvard Medical School/Brigham and Women's Hospital

**Marcin Sadowski, M.D.**  
New York University School of Medicine

**Catherine Sarkisian, M.D.**  
University of California, Los Angeles School of Medicine

**Clemens Scherzer, M.D.**  
Harvard Medical School/Brigham and Women's Hospital

**Lisa Silbert, M.D.**  
Oregon Health Sciences University

**Joe Verghese, M.D.**  
Albert Einstein College of Medicine

## The AFAR Alumni Fund

Thanks to all of you who donate to the AFAR Alumni Fund and help to create opportunities for early-career investigators in the field of aging. Contributions to the Fund have totaled more than \$12,000. Below is the list of AFAR alumni contributors:

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Ali Ahmed  
Nir and Laura Barzilai  
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