

For Immediate Release

Contact John Chaich, 212.703.9977

DR. DAVID A. SINCLAIR AND DR. LAURA NIEDERNHOFER TO RECEIVE AFAR'S 2018 SCIENTIFIC AWARDS OF DISTINCTION IN BOSTON

*Harvard Medical School's Sinclair will discuss 'Understanding Why We Grow Old As We Grow Older';
University of Minnesota's Niedernhofer to speak on 'DNA Damage: The Most Stalwart Pillar of Aging'*

Boston, MA – The American Federation for Aging Research (AFAR), a national non-profit organization whose mission is to support and advance healthy aging through biomedical research, is proud to recognize the outstanding contributions of **David A. Sinclair, Ph.D.**, and **Laura Niedernhofer, M.D., Ph.D.**, to the field of aging research through its annual honorary Scientific Awards of Distinction.

This year's awards will be presented at a special ceremony in Boston held in conjunction with the Annual Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) on **Friday, November 16, 2018 at Hynes Centers-207 Convention Center from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.**, followed by a reception from 6:30-7:30 pm.

- **David A. Sinclair, Ph.D.**, professor of genetics and co-director of the Paul F. Glenn Center for the Biological Mechanisms of Aging at Harvard Medical School, will receive the **Irving S. Wright Award of Distinction**. Established in 1982, the Irving S. Wright award is named in honor of AFAR's founder and recognizes exceptional contributions to basic or clinical research in the field of aging. Dr. Sinclair will be recognized for his contributions investigating age-related processes and the development of drugs to treat diseases of aging.
- **Laura Niedernhofer, M.D., Ph.D.**, professor of biochemistry, molecular biology, and biophysics at the University of Minnesota College of Biological Sciences, will receive the **Vincent Cristofalo Rising Star Award in Aging Research**. The Cristofalo award, established in 2008, is named in honor of the late Dr. Vincent Cristofalo, who dedicated his career to aging research and to encouraging young scientists to investigate important problems in the biology of aging. Dr. Niedernhofer will be recognized as a leader in the field of DNA damage and repair, and how DNA damage contributes to aging.

"These awards are given annually to members of the aging research community whose work advances the field and advances our understanding of aging," says AFAR Executive Director Stephanie Lederman, Ed.M. "The Irving S. Wright and Vincent Cristofalo awards are named for two visionary scientists whose leadership made AFAR and aging research what it is today. Dr. Sinclair and Dr. Niedernhofer follow the very highest standards for aging research that have been part of AFAR's DNA from the beginning."

At the awards presentation, each winner will present a lecture sharing insights from their research.

- Dr. Sinclair's lecture "Understanding Why We Grow Old As We Grow Older" will highlight the latest research breakthroughs regarding the pathways that control the pace of age-related changes, along with updates on human clinical trials and predictions about where the field of aging research is going from here.
- Dr. Niedernhofer's lecture "DNA Damage: The Most Stalwart Pillar of Aging" will discuss how reduced DNA repair in mice and in people accelerates the aging process, affecting virtually every organ system. And she will share insights on how drugs that specifically target senescent cells have been shown in mice to reduce age-related decline.

Nominations for the awards are by invitation, and are judged by an independent panel of leading aging researchers. Both awards come with framed citations and carry a cash prize of \$5,000. The two honorees were also recognized at AFAR's Annual Awards dinner in New York City on Tuesday, November 6.

To date, AFAR has presented thirty-nine Irving Wright Awards and eleven Vincent Cristofalo awards. Learn more about the **history of AFAR's Scientific Awards and past awardees** at <http://www.afar.org/research/awards/scientific-awards>.

In addition to these honorary awards of distinction, AFAR supports the field of aging research through its biology of aging and physician training grant programs. To date, AFAR's grant programs have contributed more than \$178 million to the field of aging research, by supporting more than 4,100 investigators and students.

About this Year's Awardees

David A. Sinclair, Ph.D. is professor of genetics at **Harvard Medical School**, co-director of the Paul F. Glenn Center for the Biological Mechanisms of Aging, professor and head of the Aging Labs at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, and AFAR Board Member. He is best known for his work on genes and small molecules that delay aging, including the Sirtuin genes, resveratrol, and NAD precursors. He has published more than 160 scientific papers, is a co-inventor on 50 patents, and has co-founded Life Biosciences and other biotechnology companies in the areas of aging, vaccines, diabetes, fertility, cancer, and biodefense. He is co-chief editor of the scientific journal *Aging* and works with national defense agencies and with NASA. He has received 35 honors, including the CSL prize, an Advance Global Award, an ASMR Medal, the NIH Director's Pioneer award, a Member of the Order of Australia (Australia's knighthood), and *TIME* magazine's list of the "100 most influential people in the world."

Laura Niedernhofer, M.D., Ph.D., recently joined the University of Minnesota to direct the new Institute on the Biology of Aging & Metabolism. Internationally recognized as an expert in the molecular and cellular basis of aging, Dr. Niedernhofer's expertise is in DNA damage and repair, progeroid syndromes and cellular senescence. Prior to moving to Minneapolis this summer, Dr. Niedernhofer was at The Scripps Research Institute in Jupiter, Florida. She studied chemistry at Duke University, physiology at Georgetown, and completed the medical scientist training program at Vanderbilt. Her post-doctoral training was at Erasmus Medical Center in Rotterdam, Netherlands, training in mouse genetics with Jan Hoeijmakers, an expert in genome instability disorders. Together, she and Jan have really championed the idea that DNA damage plays a causal role in aging. Laura has served on study section for NCI, NIEHS and NIA. She has been awarded for research in aging, cancer and environmental health science. Perhaps more importantly, she has been awarded for her efforts in advocacy and mentoring physician scientists.

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About AFAR - The American Federation for Aging Research (AFAR) is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to support and advance healthy aging through biomedical research. Founded in 1981, AFAR has championed the cause and supported the funding of science in healthier aging and age-related medicine. To address the shortage of physicians and researchers dedicated to the science of healthier aging, AFAR funds physicians and scientists probing the fundamental mechanisms of aging, as well as specific diseases associated with aging populations at critical points throughout their careers. AFAR engages the public through webinars, conferences and our online resource, InfoAging, featuring over two dozen downloadable guides, edited by guest experts on topics ranging from theories of aging, age-related conditions, healthy lifestyle tips, and more. Learn at www.afar.org or follow AFARorg on Twitter and Facebook.