

For Immediate Release:

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AFAR's 2017 SCIENTIFIC AWARDS OF DISTINCTION TO HONOR DR. MARK S. LACHS AND DR. DONGSHENG CAI

San Francisco, CA – 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 **Mark S. Lachs M.D.,M.P.H.** and **Dongsheng Cai, 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 San Francisco held in conjunction with the 2017 IAGG World Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics on **Tuesday July, 25, 2017 at Moscone West conference center, Room 2024, from 6:00 – 8:30 p.m.**

"These awards are given annually to members of the aging research community whose work advances the field and advances our understanding of aging," notes AFAR Executive Director Stephanie Lederman, Ed.M.



Mark S. Lachs M.D., M.P.H. co-chief of the Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine and a professor of medicine at Weill Cornell Medicine, will receive the **Irving S. Wright Award of Distinction**. This award is named in honor of AFAR's founder and recognizes exceptional contributions to basic or clinical research in the field of aging. Established in 1982, the award is a framed citation and carries a cash prize of \$5,000.



Dongsheng Cai, M.D., Ph.D. professor in the Department of Molecular Pharmacology and Institute of Aging, Albert Einstein College of Medicine in The Bronx, New York, will receive the **Vincent Cristofalo Rising Star Award in Aging Research**. This award is named in honor of the late Dr. Cristofalo, who dedicated his career to aging research and to encouraging young scientists to investigate important problems in the biology of aging. Established in 2008, the award is a framed citation and carries a cash prize of \$5,000.

"AFAR's Irving S. Wright and Vincent Cristofalo awards are named after two farsighted scientists," notes Lederman, "and this year's awardees are focused on particularly visionary areas of research: the biological and sociological influences on elder abuse, and the role of brain and neural inflammation in triggering and age-related diseases."

At the awards presentation, each winner will present a lecture sharing insights from their research. Dr. Lachs will present "How and Why We Must Integrate Biological and Social Sciences in Aging: Elder Abuse as a Paradigm." Dr. Cai will present "Hypothalamic inflammation in neural control of aging."

Nominations for the awards are by invitation, and are judged by an independent panel of leading aging researchers.

To date, AFAR has presented thirty-eight Irving Wright Awards and ten 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 \$172 million to the field of aging research, by supporting more than 4,000 investigators and students.

About this Year's Awardees

In nominating **Dr. Mark S. Lachs** for the *Irving S. Wright Award of Distinction*, a colleague notes: "As an advocate, Mark Lachs has been instrumental in raising public awareness on unfortunate rise of elder abuse in America. As a clinician and investigator, Dr. Lachs has been dedicated to understanding the cognitive and physical decline that put older patients at risk for exploitation. He truly is a citizen scientist."

Dr. Lachs is Co-Chief of the Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine, the Irene F. and I. Roy Psaty Distinguished Professor of Clinical Medicine, and a Professor of Medicine at Weill Cornell Medicine. He is also Director of Geriatrics for the NewYork-Presbyterian Health System. Dr. Lachs' major area of interest is the disenfranchised elderly, and he has published widely and lectured internationally on elder abuse and neglect, financial exploitation, the measurement of functional status, and the financing of health care for an aging population. His many National Institute of Health funded studies include the largest longitudinal study of elder abuse risk factors and outcomes, the epidemiology of resident to resident elder abuse in nursing homes, and the New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study. His service to community and country includes membership on an Institute of Medicine Committee to address the training needs of health professionals in family violence, consultation to WHO on matters related to elder abuse, and creation of the New York City Elder Abuse Center, a multidisciplinary collaboration between academicians and community partners to prevent and respond to elder abuse (www.nyceac.org). The author of a popular book on aging entitled *Treat Me Not My Age* (Viking Penguin 2010), he has appeared in multiple print and media outlets including Good Morning America, The Today Show, NPR's All Things Considered, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times. Dr. Lachs is also the President of the AFAR board of directors.

The winner of AFAR's 2017 *Vincent Cristofalo Rising Star Award in Aging Research*, **Dr. Dongsheng Cai**, has been lauded by his nominators as "an extremely creative and insightful scientist whose innovative work has had a profound impact on research into the biological mechanisms of regulating healthspan."

Dongsheng Cai, M.D., Ph.D. is currently a Professor in the Department of Molecular Pharmacology at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in Bronx, New York. The long-standing research interest of his laboratory is to study the roles of the neural-peripheral connections especially through neural immunity and inflammation molecular pathways in aging and obesity as well as their complications such as diabetes, hypertension and aging-associated cognitive and physical disorders. Dr. Cai is considered a pioneer in proposing that the hypothalamus in the brain plays a programmatic role in systematic aging, stressing the importance of local 'hypothalamic inflammation' on whole-body aging. His recent work has led to an elucidation of specific hypothalamic cells which take several neuroendocrine paths to control the speed of whole-body aging, a possible basis for developing new interventional strategies. Dr. Cai has published in *Cell*, *Nature*, *Nature Medicine*, *Nature Immunology*, *Neuron*, *Cell Metabolism*, and more, his research is well funded by NIA, NIDDK and NHLBI, and he has been invited to deliver keynote addresses and lectures at scientific meetings worldwide. Among various awards and honors, he was the recipient of the Lilly Outstanding Achievement Award from the Obesity Society in 2015.

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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.