

For Immediate Release

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Experts: Geroscience Approach May Lessen Severity of COVID-19, Bolster Older Patients' Response to Diseases

--Recording now available of webinar featuring four leading geroscience experts discussing how targeting the biology of aging may boost immune response to help older adults fight infections, diseases--

March 26, 2020 (New York, NY) – As the nation and world respond to the growing COVID-19 pandemic, a panel of leading [aging research](#) experts, convened by the American Federation for Aging Research ([AFAR](#)), posed that targeting the biology of aging through promising therapeutics could bolster the medical response to COVID-19 and other viruses that are devastating older patients.

A [recording of the webinar](#) featuring the four experts is now available for streaming. Presenter slides are also available.

“The field of aging research has developed a range of promising drug interventions, or gerotherapeutics, that may modulate response to viral infection in older adults by targeting not only immune decline and inflammation, but by increasing whole-body resiliency to severe illness,” says Nir Barzilai, MD, AFAR Scientific Director and Director of the Institute for Aging Research at Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

“We urge regulatory bodies to expedite the evaluation of these gerotherapeutics for testing in older adults exposed to COVID-19. This is an important approach not only for the current COVID-19 pandemic, but for future pandemics as well.”

The 90-minute webinar, **COVID-19: Can the Science of Aging Move Us Forward?**, explored how targeting the biology of aging that is the greatest risk factor for all major diseases—including heart disease, cancer, stroke, pneumonia, diabetes, and others—can help older adults live healthier and longer. In countries from China to Italy to the United States, older adults have by far been at greatest risk for hospitalizations, intensive care unit use, and death as a result of COVID-19.

The webinar also highlighted two promising gerotherapeutics: the common diabetes drug metformin and mTOR inhibitors such as rapamycin. In addition to Barzilai, the webinar featured:

- [Sean Leng, MD, PhD](#) - Professor of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and 2006 AFAR Beeson Scholar, who provided an overview of statistics and the geroscience approach to COVID-19 and older adults
- [George Kuchel, MD, FRCP, AGSF](#) - Director and Chief of Geriatric Medicine, UConn Center on Aging, on research related to the vulnerability of older adults to COVID-19
- [Joan Mannick, MD](#) - Co-Founder and Chief Medical Officer, resTORbio, who presented on the results of clinical trials involving resTORbio's lead product candidate, RTB101, which inhibits the activity of a protein complex called target of rapamycin complex 1, or TORC1, an evolutionarily conserved pathway that contributes to the decline in function of multiple aging organ systems.

RTB101 is an example of the gerotherapeutics, or “geroprotectors,” being developed by biotech and pharmaceutical companies to target what are known as the “hallmarks of aging,” such as immune dysfunction and inflammation.

To learn more, [view the full webinar](#). and download presenter slides [here](#).

About AFAR. The American Federation for Aging Research (AFAR) is a national non-profit organization that supports and advances pioneering biomedical research that is revolutionizing how we live healthier and longer. For nearly four decades, AFAR has served as the field's talent incubator, providing more than \$181 million to more than 4,200 investigators at premier research institutions nationwide. A trusted leader and strategist, AFAR also works with public and private funders to steer high quality grant programs and interdisciplinary research networks.

AFAR-funded researchers are finding that modifying basic cellular processes can delay—or even prevent—many chronic diseases, often at the same time. They are discovering that it is never too late—or too early—to improve health. This groundbreaking science is paving the way for innovative new therapies that promise to improve and extend our quality of life—at any age. Learn more at www.afar.org or follow AFARorg on Twitter and Facebook.