For Immediate Release

$8.4 MILLION GRANT FROM JOHN A. HARTFORD FOUNDATION WILL HELP MEET URGENT NEED FOR GERIATRICIANS

Gift to American Federation for Aging Research Will Fund Two Programs Aimed At Increasing Geriatrics Workforce

New York, NY – October 26, 2012 - A generous $8.4 million, 43-month gift from The John A. Hartford Foundation to the American Federation for Aging Research (AFAR) will provide significant funding for the Centers for Excellence in Geriatric Medicine and Geriatric Psychiatry and the Medical Student Training in Research (MSTAR) program. The two initiatives, seek to address the shortage of geriatrics faculty at American medical schools and the dearth of physicians entering geriatric medicine.

"We continue to support these two programs because of the ongoing, urgent need to increase the geriatrics workforce to serve a burgeoning older population," said Corinne H. Rieder, EdD, Executive Director and Treasurer, John A. Hartford Foundation. “AFAR has been a long-time partner in our efforts to address this issue.”

“The John A. Hartford Foundation has been a leader in addressing this critical need,” said AFAR Medical Officer Richard W. Besdine, MD, Professor of Medicine and of Health Policy, Greer Professor of Geriatric Medicine, Director of the Center for Gerontology and Health Care Research, and Director of the Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine at the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University. “Geriatricians are desperately needed to address the complex medical problems of the aging population, and this need will only increase as millions of Baby Boomers age.”

Geriatrics or geriatric medicine is a subspecialty of internal medicine and family medicine that focuses on the care of older people. The aged body is physiologically different from the younger adult body, and older adults may have more complex health issues and develop serious complications from even mild problems. Seventy-eight million Baby Boomers turned 65 last year, and experts project there will be nearly 70 million Americans age 65 or older by 2030.

The John A. Hartford Foundation Centers of Excellence in Geriatric Medicine and
Training were initiated in 1988 to address the critical shortage of geriatrics faculty at medical schools across the country. Currently, 28 Centers of Excellence are training fellows and faculty in the special knowledge and skills needed to ensure quality healthcare for older adults. To date, nearly $50 million has been granted to create a cadre of academic leaders in geriatrics.

The Medical Student Training in Aging Research (MSTAR) program seeks to expose future physicians to geriatric medicine experiences early in their careers. The program gives these medical students the opportunity to participate in a summer of aging-related research, education, and clinical training at National Institute on Aging (NIA)-funded training centers and at some of the nation’s top-tier academic institutions. The scholarships, which range from 8 to 12 weeks, provide students with monthly stipends of approximately $1,750. Fifty medical students are supported by private funding and will participate in the MSTAR program at their home institutions this year, while 97 students will receive financial support through the NIA and train at NIA’s training centers. In addition to The John A. Hartford Foundation, MetLife Foundation and the NIA are major funders of the MSTAR program.

According to the Association of Directors of Geriatric Academic Programs, despite rapid growth in the elderly population, the ratio of geriatricians to seniors will significantly decrease – from one geriatrician for every 2,620 Americans age 75 and older today, to one geriatrician for every 3,798 older Americans in 2030. The most recent data show that only 56 percent of first-year geriatrics training slots in American medical schools were filled, and the percentages are even lower for geriatric psychiatry and geriatric osteopathic medicine fellowships.

About the John A. Hartford Foundation
The John A. Hartford Foundation is America’s leading philanthropy with a sustained interest in aging and health. The Foundation seeks to strengthen the nation’s capacity to provide effective, affordable care to our rapidly growing older population. The Foundation’s grant funding educates health professionals, supports new research, and develops innovations that improve and integrate health and supportive services for older adults.

About AFAR
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.