For Immediate Release

Contact: John Chaich
john@afar.org

Malene Hansen, PhD (Buck Institute / Sanford Burnham Prebys) and Morgan Levine, PhD (Yale School of Medicine)

recognized for their outstanding contributions to aging research

New York, NY – 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 Malene Hansen, PhD, and Morgan Levine, PhD to the field of aging research through its 2021 Scientific Awards of Distinction.

Malene Hansen, PhD, 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. Dr. Hansen is the Chief Scientific Officer and a Professor at the Buck Institute for Research on Aging, Novato, CA, as well as a Professor at Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute, La Jolla, CA. A four-time AFAR grantee, she is a global leader in the field of research on aging. Her laboratory works to understand the molecular mechanisms that affect the process of aging using a combination of genetic, cytological and biochemical approaches, with a particular focus on the relationship between the cellular recycling process autophagy and aging.

Morgan Levine, PhD, 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. Dr. Levine is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Pathology at the Yale School of Medicine and a member of both the Yale Combined Program in Computational Biology and Bioinformatics, and the Yale Center for Research on Aging. Her work relies on an interdisciplinary approach, integrating theories and methods from statistical genetics, computational biology, and mathematical demography to develop biomarkers of aging for humans and animal models using high-dimensional omics data.

"These awards are given annually to members of the aging research community whose work advances both the field and our understanding of aging," notes AFAR Executive Director Stephanie Lederman, EdM. "Both awards are named in honor of farsighted scientists, and the recipients are chosen for their vision and accomplishments."

Nominations for the awards are by invitation and are judged by an independent panel of leading aging researchers. To date, AFAR has presented 42 Irving Wright Awards and 14 Vincent Cristofalo 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 $184 million to the field of aging research, by supporting more than 4,200 investigators and students.

The awards will be presented at the Annual Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America in November 2021, where Dr.Hansen and Dr. Levine will also give lectures. Dr. Hansen will present on the role of cellular recycling in aging, while Dr. Levine will present on the multifactorial nature of epigenetic aging.

About the Awardees

Malene Hansen, PhD: 2021 Irving S. Wright Award | Dr. Hansen currently holds dual affiliations, as she is transitioning from Professor at the Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute (SBP) in San Diego, CA, to her new position as Chief Scientific Officer and Professor at the Buck Institute for Research on Aging in Northern California in August 2021. Her lab uses genetic and biochemical methods in both the short-lived nematode *C. elegans* as well as mammalian cell cultures to investigate the molecular mechanisms of aging and age-related diseases with a focus on the cell's ability to recycle its own components, a process called autophagy (awarded the 2016 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine). Dr. Hansen obtained a Master of Science in biochemistry in 1998, and a doctorate in molecular biology in 2001, both from Copenhagen University, Denmark. She subsequently carried out postdoctoral studies at University of California, San Francisco in the laboratory of Professor Cynthia Kenyon, Ph.D. Dr. Hansen started her laboratory at SBP in the fall of 2007, where she also served as Associate Dean of Student Affairs in SBP's accredited graduate program, and as Faculty Advisor on Postdoctoral Training for SBP's ~120 postdoctoral scholars until February 2021. In recognition of her mentoring efforts, Dr. Hansen received the 2017 Mentor Award from the National Postdoctoral Association in the US. She has organized a number of international scientific conferences, including the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory's meeting on Mechanisms of Aging from 2014-2018 and the 2020 Keystone meeting on Aging, and she is a co-chair of the 2022 Gordon Research Conference on Autophagy. She was also the inaugural Research Development Core leader of the San Diego Nathan Shock Center**.**

Morgan Levine, PhD: 2021 Vincent Cristofalo Rising Star Award in Aging Research | Morgan Levine, PhD is a ladder-rank Assistant Professor in the Department of Pathology at the Yale School of Medicine and a member of both the Yale Combined Program in Computational Biology and Bioinformatics, and the Yale Center for Research on Aging. Her work relies on an interdisciplinary approach, integrating theories and methods from statistical genetics, computational biology, and mathematical demography to develop biomarkers of aging for humans and animal models using high-dimensional omics data. As PI or co-Investigator on multiple NIH-, Foundation-, and University-funded projects, she has extensive experience using systems-level and machine learning approaches to track epigenetic, transcriptomic, and proteomic changes with aging and incorporate this information to develop measures of risk stratification for major chronic diseases, such as cancer and Alzheimer's disease. Her work also involves development of systems-level outcome measures of aging, aimed at facilitating evaluation for geroprotective interventions. A number of the existing biological aging measures she has developed are being applied in both basic and observational research.

###

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 four decades, AFAR has served as the field's talent incubator, providing more than $184 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.