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**MetLife Foundation Awards \$200,000 Grant to Provide Geriatric Training to Medical Students**

Program Addresses Growing Public Health Problem of Too Few Doctors to Care for a Rising Aging Population

NEW YORK, October 1, 2009 -- The American Federation for Aging Research announces that it has been awarded a \$200,000 grant from MetLife Foundation for its Medical Student Training in Aging Research (MSTAR) Program. The funding will provide 50 medical students with the opportunity to participate in an eight- to twelve-week research, educational, and clinical mentorship program alongside top experts at some of the leading academic institutions in the country.

Geriatric training is an increasing necessity, when one considers that over the next two decades, the number of older adults in the United States is expected to increase to 70 million. According to the Institute of Medicine, more than 75 percent of adults over 65 suffer from at least one chronic medical condition that requires ongoing care and management; 20 percent of Medicare beneficiaries have five or more chronic conditions. Despite a rising elderly population, however, the Association of Directors of Geriatric Academic Programs (ADGAP) reports that in 2008 there were only 7,590 board certified geriatricians—one geriatrician for every 2,500 Americans 75 or older. The ratio is expected to decrease to one geriatrician for every 4,254 older Americans by 2030. An April 2008 report by the Institute of Medicine called for more and enhanced geriatrics training for all health professionals and the offering of financial incentive plans to boost recruitment and retention of geriatric specialists.

To address these challenges, the MSTAR Program was launched to attract more physicians to geriatric research, teaching, and clinical practice by providing early exposure to the field and reinforcing students' interests throughout their medical training. Since 1994, the program has trained approximately 1,350 medical students from almost all of the medical schools in the United States. Students train at nationally renowned training centers supported by the National Institute on Aging, another sponsor of the program or in some cases, at their home institution.

"Given the demographic realities of the next 20 years and beyond, our healthcare system desperately requires more researchers in geriatrics and more clinicians trained to meet the special needs of older patients," said Corinne Rieder, EdD, Executive Director of The John A.

Hartford Foundation. "The MSTAR Program is a powerful and cost-effective vehicle for introducing talented future physicians to the field. We are so pleased that MetLife Foundation is joining us. Their generosity will help us reach many more students, who will in turn serve as resources for their peers."

"For the past several years, the MSTAR program has successfully brought medical students and mentors together in the interest of aging research. This has encouraged some of the best and brightest in medicine to pursue either a basic science, health services, or clinical research career for the benefit of our aging population," notes Richard J. Hodes, MD, Director of the National Institute on Aging (NIA), a component of the National Institutes of Health, which contributes to the support of MSTAR and administers the program with AFAR. "We welcome MetLife Foundation's recognition of the MSTAR program and its commitment to MSTAR's enhancement and expansion."

"MetLife Foundation is pleased to support this initiative, which is designed to encourage students to choose geriatrics or gerontology as a profession," said Dennis White, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. "This support is critical to ensuring that the health care system is better prepared to handle the needs of a dramatically increasing elderly population in the decades to come."

On September 25, the NIA issued a new Request for Applications (RFA) for the short-term research training opportunities. For more information about funding and applications, please view the pertinent section of the NIH Guide at <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-AG-10-007.html>.

In addition to MetLife Foundation, the program, which was initiated by The John A. Hartford Foundation, is supported by the National Institute on Aging, the Lillian R. Gleitsman Foundation, the Community Health Foundation of Western & Central New York, the Henry Adelman Fund for Medical Student Education and the Carmen Pettapiece DO Student Research Fund, and administered by the American Federation for Aging Research.

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The **American Federation for Aging Research** is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to support biomedical research on aging. It is devoted to creating the knowledge that all of us need to live healthy, productive, and independent lives. Since 1981, AFAR has awarded approximately \$124 million to more than 2,600 early and mid-career scientists and medical students as part of its broad-based series of grant programs. Its work has led to significant advances in our understanding of aging processes, age-related diseases, and healthy aging practices. AFAR communicates news of these innovations through its organizational web site [www.afar.org](http://www.afar.org) and educational web sites Infoaging ([www.infoaging.org](http://www.infoaging.org)) and Health Compass ([www.healthcompass.org](http://www.healthcompass.org)).

**MetLife Foundation** was established in 1976 by MetLife to carry on its long-standing tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. The Foundation has been involved in a variety of aging-related initiatives addressing issues of caregiving, intergenerational activities, mental fitness, health and wellness programs and civic involvement. For more than 20 years, MetLife and MetLife Foundation have invested more than \$17 million for Alzheimer's research and public information programs, including over \$11.5 million through the *Awards for Medical Research in Alzheimer's Disease* program. For additional information about the Foundation, visit [www.metlife.org](http://www.metlife.org).