

For Immediate Release

Contact: K.K. Apple (212)703-9977
Fred Yaeger (914) 525-9198

A CALL TO ACTION: CONTINUING THE LEGACY OF ROBERT N. BUTLER, MD

“Robert N. Butler, MD, a pioneer in the field of aging who passed away this weekend, represented a vision of aging research that was not well understood, but will ultimately benefit many,” said Stephanie Lederman, executive director of the American Federation of Aging Research (AFAR). “His belief that one day we will discover a new intervention that can significantly delay aging pioneered a new way of thinking about the diseases of aging, asking the question ‘What is it that predisposes us to disease?’ We can find the answer by studying the aging process. Following Dr. Butler’s lead, there are now thousands of scientists studying the underlying molecular mechanisms of disease itself, rather than looking only at treatment options for one disease at a time.”

The American Federation for Aging Research (AFAR), www.afar.org, is a leader in funding scientists who study what Dr. Butler referred to as “Longevity Science”. AFAR continues to fund the science that will unveil important insights into the disease pathways involved in many of the chronic problems associated with aging.

AFAR has distributed over 160 million dollars in funding grants to scientists studying the aging process and society is reaping the benefits of this science. Researchers have identified longevity genes, made strides in understanding how telomere length affects our biological clock and are investigating whether caloric restriction can extend life in humans. By gaining a better understanding of the science of aging and learning how to delay the onset of age-related diseases, this research reduces years of costly dependence on medical and long-term care facilities and decreases the load on an already strained healthcare system. Longevity Science offers a new understanding of how a longer and healthier life can be achieved.

“AFAR has played a key role in funding research scientists,” Ms. Lederman emphasized, “but research on aging is facing a shortage of funding which can attract scientists to this field continuing to support this vital research. We face the reality that laboratories will close and valuable knowledge will be left behind. If we are to continue Dr. Butler’s legacy, we need to create a movement that will insure that we add good health to our years. We cannot wait; we need to turn our attention to understanding aging and age-related diseases so we can extend the healthy, active lives of older adults and limit the economic and personal burdens of an aging nation. As one of the founders of AFAR, Robert Butler championed aging research as the key to understanding disease. At AFAR, we are continuing the work of Dr. Butler by supporting aging research and the science that will lead to longer, healthy lives.”

###