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FOUR LEADING RESEARCHERS RECEIVE 2016 METLIFE FOUNDATION AWARDS FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH IN ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

TORONTO, CANADA--MetLife Foundation is proud to announce the recipients of the 2016 MetLife Foundation Awards for Medical Research in Alzheimer's Disease. This is the 30th year that MetLife Foundation has presented these prestigious awards to outstanding researchers in the field of Alzheimer's disease. At the heart of the program is a belief in research as the road to understanding and ultimately treating this devastating disease. This year, MetLife Foundation is presenting 4 awards in 2 categories, totaling \$350,000:

Major Awards:

- **Guojun Bu, Ph.D.**, Mary Lowell Leary Professor, Department of Neuroscience; Associate Director, Alzheimer's Disease Research Center at the Mayo Clinic, Jacksonville, Florida.
- **Miia Kivipelto, M.D., Ph.D.**, Professor, Clinical Geriatric Epidemiology, Department of Neurobiology, Care Sciences and Society, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden; Senior Geriatrician, Memory Clinic and Director of Research, Development and Education, Karolinska University Hospital, Stockholm, Sweden.

Promising Investigator Awards:

- **John R. Cirrito, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor, Department of Neurology, Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri.
- **Inna Slutsky, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor, Department of Physiology and Pharmacology; Associate Professor, Sagol School of Neuroscience, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel.
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The awards will be presented by MetLife Foundation President and Chief Executive Officer Dennis White during the morning Plenary Session of the Alzheimer's Association International Conference on **Monday, July 25, 2016** from **10:30 to 11:45 a.m.** in **Hall F&G at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, South Building, Level 800, Toronto, Canada.** www.alz.org/aaic

Drs. Bu, Kivipelto, Cirrito, and Slutsky will be available for interviews.
Credentialed media are invited to attend the plenary presentation.

“MetLife Foundation is proud to present the Major Awards to Dr. Bu and Dr. Kivipelto for their exceptional scientific research contributions, which help bring us closer to finding a cure for Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias,” notes A. Dennis White, President and Chief Executive Officer, MetLife Foundation. “Their outstanding contributions, recognized around the world, have helped us better understand this devastating illness, and both awardees have laid the groundwork leading to effective treatments.”

White continues: “Our Advisory Committee were so impressed by the potential impact of Dr. Slutsky and Dr. Cirrito’s research that they have granted them the Promising Investigator awards this year.”

Since 1986, through the Awards for Medical Research for Alzheimer’s Disease, MetLife Foundation has given over \$18 million to 88 awardees at 52 institutions in 8 countries.

According to recent estimates, without the development of treatments that either delay the onset or slow the progression of Alzheimer’s disease, by 2050 as many as 200 million people worldwide will be living with the disease.

The evening of the plenary session, the awardees will share their insights at a research briefing for an exclusive audience of past awardees and leaders in the field. “As we recognize thirty years of excellence in Alzheimer’s research through these awards,” notes White, “MetLife Foundation is proud and humbled that our support has helped work toward a cure for this devastating disease.”

About the Awardees:



Guojun Bu, Ph.D.’s breakthrough discoveries focused on the cell surface receptor called L-R-P-1. Dr. Bu researched the receptor’s role in liver function and discovered that one of its binding partners is apolipoprotein E, or ApoE. When it was discovered that carriers of gene for the protein called ApoE4 were at significantly greater risk of developing Alzheimer’s in later life, Dr. Bu focused his attention on understanding the biology of ApoE and its receptors as they relate to the pathology of Alzheimer’s and related dementia. Over the last 20 years, Dr. Bu’s lab has produced over 220 peer-reviewed articles that have been cited over 10,000 times. His team’s contributions to Alzheimer’s research rank among the most significant in the field. Alzheimer’s disease prevention has become a primary focus of Dr. Bu’s research. One prevention target is addressing the accumulation of amyloid beta in the brains of people who are known to be at increased risk of developing Alzheimer’s. Dr. Bu is involved with prevention trials and believes this is where we will see the greatest success in coming years. His team includes chemists who can help develop drugs from the compounds they are researching. Dr. Bu’s work exemplifies his ability to foster the collaborative, team-based science needed to facilitate the passing of scientific discoveries from patients to the bench and back to patients in the form of effective treatments.



Miia Kivipelto, M.D., Ph.D. was the principal investigator on a study titled Cardiovascular Risk Factors, Aging and Incidence of Dementia, or CAIDE. CAIDE is one of the first research projects linking mid-life vascular condition and lifestyle factors with people’s risk of late-life dementia, including Alzheimer’s disease. Dr. Kivipelto’s data suggested that starting and sustaining common, preventive strategies twenty years before symptoms of age-related dementia typically appear could significantly reduce and delay cognitive decline. In 2006, Dr. Kivipelto introduced the CAIDE Dementia Risk Score, the first tool for predicting the likelihood of an individual developing dementia based on his or her mid-life risk profile. Dr. Kivipelto went on to expand her research into the now landmark Finnish Geriatric Intervention Study to Prevent Cognitive Impairment and Disability, also known as FINGER. This is the first large randomized controlled trial seeking to prevent Alzheimer’s disease and thereby substantially reduce both individual suffering and the societal costs of the Alzheimer’s epidemic. Dr. Kivipelto’s next goal is to enable clinicians to tailor specific prevention strategies to individual cases. With that goal in mind, she is leading several collaborative initiatives, including a particularly ambitious project called MULTI-MODE, which hopes to produce and commercialize two evidence-based e-health tools to predict dementia risk and prevent Alzheimer’s among at-risk populations. The goals of MULTI-MODE are to promote healthy living through lifestyle interventions and to encourage self-management of health.



John R. Cirrito, Ph.D. was a graduate student when he appreciated that amyloid beta in the fluid around brain cells gave rise to the amyloid plaques in Alzheimer's disease. But there was no way of measuring how much amyloid beta was actually in that brain fluid. He set out to fill this gap in the research. Dr. Cirrito developed a method for measuring amyloid beta in the fluid around brain cells. His technique allowed tracking of levels every hour in a living, freely moving mouse. By making adjustments to these mouse models—such as age, sleep patterns, levels of activity or drug treatments—Dr. Cirrito and his team were able to show cause and effect relationships between various conditions and amyloid beta production and clearance in a living brain. His protocol has since been adopted by eight other laboratories. He has recently developed a new technology to measure brain amyloid beta every 60 seconds. Dr. Cirrito's work is relevant to any therapeutic strategies looking to enhance clearance of amyloid beta.



Inna Slutsky, Ph.D. has been researching how memories are created and maintained, and what causes individuals to lose their ability to remember. Dr. Slutsky has focused her research on the breakdown of lines communication between brain cells, in particular, in the pathology of Alzheimer's disease. Among the many insights her team has learned is that amyloid beta has a critical role in normal brain activity. She discovered that communication between cells is compromised when production of amyloid beta around synapses is blocked. Her results predict that lowering the protein's concentration too far might be just as damaging as a higher, toxic level of amyloid beta accumulation. In focusing on Alzheimer's disease, Dr. Slutsky has identified specific properties of synaptic activity that regulate the levels of various forms of amyloid beta. Her goal is to set the groundwork for establishing guidelines and therapies for maintaining the optimal balance of amyloid beta isoforms in a healthy brain. Dr. Slutsky's work has significant implications for the development of any treatment targeting amyloid beta accumulation or clearance.

About the Awards:

Now in their 30th year, the MetLife Foundation Awards for Medical Research in Alzheimer's Disease provide outstanding researchers with an opportunity to freely pursue new ideas. At the heart of the program is a belief in research as the road to understanding and ultimately treating this devastating disease.

MetLife Foundation established the awards in 1986 to recognize and reward scientists demonstrating significant contributions to the understanding of Alzheimer's disease.

This year, \$350,000 in awards has been given. The Major Award carries a \$100,000 institutional grant and a personal prize of \$25,000. The Promising Investigator award carries a \$50,000 institutional grant.

The awardees are selected by an expert advisory committee, led by chair David M. Holtzman, M.D., the Andrew B. and Gretchen P. Jones Professor and chairman, Department of Neurology, Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis Missouri. Dr. Holtzman received a Major Award from MetLife Foundation in 2006.

The awards are administered by the American Federation for Aging Research, who manages the award selection process and expert committee as well as the awards presentation.

"These four individuals have performed groundbreaking work, and the awards will help further their pioneering research," noted Dr. Holtzman. "Drs. Bu, Kivipelto, Slutsky, and Cirrito join a roster of past winners whose work has gone on to receive recognition in the field and beyond, including the Nobel Prize, the Potamkin Prize, and TIME Magazine's scientist of the year. MetLife Foundation has an outstanding track record of recognizing talent whose research has sparked or advanced major research paradigms."

Learn more about past awardees at <http://mlfawards.afar.org>

About MetLife Foundation:

[MetLife Foundation](#) was established in 1976 by MetLife to carry on its long tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. For over 30 years, MetLife and MetLife Foundation have invested more than \$33 million for Alzheimer's research and public information programs, including over \$18 million through the Awards for Medical Research in Alzheimer's disease program. The Foundation has also supported a number of major initiatives, including the PBS *documentary The Forgetting: A Portrait of Alzheimer's*; short pocket films on Alzheimer's narrated by David Hyde-Pierce; an educational initiative with the National Institute on Aging's Alzheimer's Disease Centers; the film Alzheimer's Disease: Facing the Facts; and initiatives that include caregiving videos, Alzheimer's toolkits and resources for the Hispanic community. Learn more about MetLife Foundation [here](#).

About AFAR:

Founded in 1981, AFAR has championed the cause and supported the funding of science in healthier aging and age-related medicine. Cognizant of the shortage of physicians and researchers dedicated to the bioscience of aging, AFAR pursues grants from foundations, corporations and individuals to fund important research into age-related health and diseases such as Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, dementia, and other illnesses. AFAR funds physicians and scientists probing the fundamental mechanisms of aging, as well as specific diseases associated with aging populations. For more information visit <http://www.afar.org>.

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