

American Cancer Society Researcher Among Nobel Prize Winners

Award Means 43 Society Funded Researchers Have Received the Honor

Atlanta 2009/10/05 -One of the three scientists receiving the 2009 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine received an American Cancer Society research grant early in his career, bringing to 43 the number of Nobel Laureates among the Society's funded researchers.

Former American Cancer Society research grantee Jack W. Szostak, Ph.D., of the Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, Mass., is a co-winner of the 2009 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine along with Elizabeth H. Blackburn, Ph.D., of the University of California, San Francisco, and Carol W. Greider of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, Md. They were recognized for their discovery of how chromosomes are protected by telomeres and the enzyme telomerase. Their work described the function of telomeres, which reside on the end of chromosomes and are often compared to the plastic tips at the end of shoe laces that prevent them from unraveling, and the enzyme telomerase, which adds DNA to the tips of chromosomes to replace genetic material that has eroded away. Their groundbreaking research in the late 1970s and early 1980s identified the potential that telomerase might be manipulated for therapeutic purposes to prolong cell life and combat cancer. The discoveries have had an impact not only on cancer research but also on research into aging and other diseases. Dr. Szostak received an American Cancer Society grants early in his career, before the profound implication of their work would become clear. He was supported by an American Cancer Society project grant for \$125,000 between 1981 and 1983 while at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute for "Mutants of Yeast Deficient in Mitotic Recombination."

In addition, all three recipients have mentored American Cancer Society grantees. Dr. Szostak was a mentor to American Cancer Society grantee Grant R. Zimmermann, Ph.D. (1998-2000). Dr. Blackburn has been a mentor to five American Cancer Society researchers: Bradley A. Stohr, M.D., Ph.D. (2005-2008), Jeffrey J. Seidel, Ph.D. (2003-2006), David Gilley, Ph.D. (1993-1995), Karen E. Kirk, Ph.D. (1992-1995), and Dorothy Shippen, Ph.D. (1989-1991). Dr. Greider was the mentor to grantee Alyson A. Kass-Eisler, Ph.D. (1996 -1999). Dr. Blackburn also received the American Cancer Society Medal of Honor, the Society's highest honor, in 2000.

"The American Cancer Society's research department has long recognized the importance of funding promising grants by scientists early in their careers," said Elizabeth "Terry" T.H. Fontham, M.P.H., Dr.P.H., national volunteer president of the American Cancer Society. "The high honor Dr. Szostak received today is a proud reminder of the strength of the Society's peer-review process and the credibility of its research grant program. The work of his that the Society began funding more than three decades ago is now recognized as having enormous potential to help us achieve a world with more birthdays, and inspires us to continue our investment in cancer research by training future professionals who will contribute more cancer research discoveries."

About the American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society combines an unyielding passion with nearly a century of experience to save lives and end suffering from cancer. As a global grassroots force of more than three million volunteers, we fight for every birthday threatened by every cancer in every community. We save lives by helping people stay well by preventing cancer or detecting it early; helping people get well by being there for them during and after a cancer diagnosis; by finding cures through investment in groundbreaking discovery; and by fighting back by rallying lawmakers to pass laws to defeat cancer and by rallying communities worldwide to join the fight. As the nation's largest non-governmental investor in cancer research, contributing about \$3.4 billion, we turn what we know about cancer into what we do. As a result, more than 11 million people in America who have had

cancer and countless more who have avoided it will be celebrating birthdays this year. To learn more about us or to get help, call us any time, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345 or visit cancer.org.

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David Sampson
Director, Medical & Scientific Communications
American Cancer Society
213 368-8523
david.sampson@cancer.org
