# American Cancer Society Awards 2026 Medal of Honor to Dr. Tyler Jacks

**ATLANTA, March 6, 2026** — The American Cancer Society (ACS) has awarded the 2026 Medal of Honor to Dr. Tyler Jacks, professor of biology at the David H. Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and president of the collaborative cancer research initiative Break *Through* Cancer. The Medal of Honor is the most prestigious award given by ACS to distinguished individuals who have made valuable contributions in basic, clinical, translational, or population science and whose work has led to advancement in cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment, or survivorship to improve the lives of patients.

Dr. Jacks is a pioneer in the development and use of genetically engineered mouse models to study difficult-to-treat human cancers. These models help scientists understand how tumors start and evolve, how closely they resemble human cancers, and how tools used in early cancer detection can be improved. In his MIT lab, Dr. Jacks and his group study how key genes, including tumor suppressors, oncogenes, and genes related to DNA repair, help cancers resist treatment and promote growth. Dr. Jacks has also conducted extensive research into how the immune system sees and also fails to see developing cancers.

"Your tireless commitment to addressing the complexities of cancer continues to change how cancers are treated and brings hope to patients, survivors, caregivers, and loved ones everywhere—for this, we are deeply grateful," said Dr. William Dahut, chief scientific officer at the American Cancer Society. "Beyond scientific impact, your visionary thinking, collaborative approach, dedication to mentoring, and strong leadership distinguished you among an exceptionally competitive pool of candidates."

At Break *Through* Cancer, Dr. Jacks leads a nonprofit initiative dedicated to advancing research for some of the deadliest cancers, such as ovarian cancer, glioblastoma, pancreatic cancer, and acute myeloid leukemia, through radical collaboration. Break *Through* Cancer has collapsed traditional research silos and has brought together five of the nation's most prestigious cancer institutions to collaborate, exchange data, and accelerate scientific discovery.

“I am very grateful to the American Cancer Society for this very special recognition," Jacks said. "I am pleased to receive it on behalf of the many, many trainees and colleagues with whom I have worked over all of these years, and in honor of those who have suffered from cancer or lost their lives to the disease. We can and must do more to prevail in the fight against cancer.”

Dr. Jacks graduated *magna cum laude* with highest honors in biology from Harvard College. He earned his doctorate at the University of California, San Francisco, where he studied under Dr. Harold Varmus, who won the 1989 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for research on oncogenes and cancer growth.

Author of more than 300 scientific papers, Dr. Jacks has served as chair of the National Cancer Advisory Board and the Board of Scientific Advisors of the National Cancer Institute and as past president and board member of the American Association of Cancer Research (AACR). His many awards include the AACR Outstanding Achievement Award, the Paul Marks Prize for Cancer Research, and MIT’s James R. Killian Jr. Faculty Achievement Award. He is an elected member of the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Medicine.

Dr. Jacks will be celebrated at the Medal of Honor Ceremony on March 14, 2026, in Washington, D.C.

Originally called the American Cancer Society Award, the Medal of Honor was first presented in 1949. Candidates for the Medal of Honor are nominated by the scientific community and the ACS Board of Directors.

The most recent ACS Medal of Honor was awarded to renowned kidney cancer expert Dr. W. Kimryn Rathmell, a former director of the National Cancer Institute. Previous recipients of the Medal of Honor include Dr. George N. Papanicolaou, inventor of the Pap test; Dr. Robert C. Gallo, recognized for his pioneering work in human retrovirology; and Dr. Judah Folkman, a leading researcher in antiangiogenesis.

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**About the American Cancer Society**
The American Cancer Society is a leading cancer-fighting organization with a vision to end cancer as we know it, for everyone. For more than 110 years, we have been improving the lives of people with cancer and their families as the only organization combating cancer through advocacy, research, and patient support. We are committed to ensuring everyone has an opportunity to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer. To learn more, visit cancer.org or call our 24/7 helpline at 1-800-227-2345. Connect with us on Facebook, X, and Instagram.

For further information: FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: American Cancer Society, Anne.Doerr@cancer.org

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