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Securing the Future of Medical Science

11th Annual APSA Conference to Focus on the Importance of the Next Generation of Biomedical Researchers and Supporting Female Physician Scientists

April 24 – 28, 2015, Chicago, IL

CHICAGO, IL: On April 24 and 25, the American Physician Scientists Association (APSA) and the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation will join forces at the 11th Annual Meeting of APSA to lead important conversations about the future of biomedical research with a focus on the next generation of physician-scientists.

Physician-scientists and biomedical researchers devote their careers to advancing medical science that leads to a better understanding of human disease, which paves the way for discovering new cures and improving treatments. They play an important role in maintaining the health of Americans by eradicating diseases such as Polio which was eliminated from the United States thanks to the work of Jonas Salk and Albert Sabin, two pioneering physician-scientists.

The number of physician-scientists leading biomedical research projects has been on the decline for years. Facing increasing demands to see more patients, many physicians forgo a scientific career. Young biomedical researchers in the U.S. find it increasingly hard to secure long-term research positions or adequate start-up funding.

The 2015 APSA-Lasker Award Lecture was developed by the Lasker Foundation and APSA to inspire the next generation of biomedical research scientists and will be delivered on April 24th by Alfred Sommer, MD, Dean Emeritus, Bloomberg School of Public Health and University Distinguished Service Professor at Johns Hopkins University.

In his lecture, Dr. Sommer will describe his journey through medical science and share his thoughts on the important role physician-scientists play in modern medicine. APSA and Lasker aim to further motivate young physician-scientists and provide useful lessons they can apply to their new careers in biomedical research.

Dr. Sommer's career and achievements are powerful examples of how physician-scientists can have a significant impact on the health and well-being of vast numbers of people. He pioneered the study of

vitamin A, leading the discovery that mild deficiency of vitamin A is a major cause of preventable childhood death. His research led to widespread use of vitamin A supplementation, an intervention that UNICEF has credited with saving the lives of millions of children.

“Physician-scientists are uniquely prepared to recognize important, often unexpected associations between disease and its causes, and to pursue ways to prevent and treat it,” says Dr. Sommer.

On April 25, Dr. Claire Pomeroy, President of the Lasker Foundation, will participate in the APSA Panel: Women in Medicine and Science. The panel will address the importance of ensuring that female physician-scientists succeed in biomedical research. Dr. Pomeroy will be joined by distinguished female physician-scientists, Louise Laurent, MD, PhD and Hilary Reno, MD, PhD.

“It is essential that our nation and the world benefit from the brain power provided by women physician-scientists. To ensure effective and inclusive medical advances, we must come together to create the individual and organizational changes needed to ensure that women in science thrive,” says Dr. Pomeroy.

Women remain under-represented in the ranks of physician scientists at research institutions, as senior faculty members at medical schools, and in other important leadership roles. This under-representation is, despite their contributions to biomedical discoveries. Examples include the work on nerve growth and development by Rita Levi-Montalcini, MD, and the work by Elizabeth Blackburn and Carol Greider on telomeres, all of which were subsequently recognized with the Nobel Prize in Medicine. The Women in Medicine and Science panel will discuss issues and provide advice from experienced female physician-scientists on how to navigate the biomedical research field.

The challenges and opportunities for rising physician-scientists— including female physician-scientists—are complex and it’s crucial that the biomedical research community join forces to create an environment for young biomedical researchers to flourish. The lectures led by APSA and the Lasker Foundation during the 11th Annual Meeting are an important step toward creating a bright future for the next generation of research scientists.

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About the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation:

Founded in 1942, the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation envisions a healthier world through sustained support for basic and clinical medical research. The Foundation works to accomplish its mission through education and advocacy and, most notably, through a prestigious annual awards program, now in its 70th year. Lasker Award winners are selected by their peers, who, like themselves, include the world’s most accomplished and well-respected medical research scientists, and thus the award represents a special honor. The Foundation’s education and advocacy missions focus on engaging the public and policymakers on the importance of robust medical research programs and the funding to make them possible. The Lasker foundation is also dedicated to supporting and inspiring the next generation of research scientists. For more information about the Lasker Foundation and its programs, visit <http://www.laskerfoundation.org>.

About the American Physician Scientists Association:

The American Physician Scientists Association was founded in 2003 by trainees, for trainees. From its roots as a small group of students, APSA has grown into an organization of over one thousand members. APSA continues to be trainee-led, and is the premier organization for physician-scientist trainee advocacy. APSA's efforts today include partnerships with specialty societies, advocacy at the local and national level, and numerous unique benefits, including mentorship opportunities and special awards from partner societies, exclusively for APSA members. Learn more about the history of APSA and how to become a member at <http://www.physicianscientists.org/>