THE ALBERT AND MARY LASKER FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF 2015 ESSAY CONTEST

Honorees Explore Fundamental Mysteries in Biology with the Greatest Potential to Impact Human Health

June 23, 2015, New York, NY: The Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation revealed today the winners of the 2015 Lasker Essay Contest. Challenged to examine the most important fundamental mystery in biology that, if unlocked by research, could yield profound impacts on human health, the winners wrote on a wide variety of compelling topics that included the microbiome, computational models of the human body, depression, and genomic approaches to medicine.

The 2015 first place prize of $10,000 and a trip to New York City for the annual Lasker Award Ceremony go to David Hill, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Michigan Medical center. In his essay, "Mutual Understanding: Uncovering the Mechanistic Basis of the Host-Symbiont Relationship in Human Health," Dr. Hill asserts that by better understanding the microbiome and creating therapies directed at restoring the bacterial balance of the body we could improve the health and vitality of patients.

"We are delighted to recognize the brilliant young scientists that entered our annual essay contest. The depth and breadth of the topics explored is a testament to the talent and potential of the next generation of scientists currently working at our nation's universities," said Dr. Claire Pomeroy, President of the Lasker Foundation. "The Lasker Foundation is committed to supporting and celebrating young research scientists. As part of this commitment, the four winners of the 2015 Lasker Essay contest will receive financial support to continue their education."

Second place was awarded to Joseph Rathkey, a medical student at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. His essay urges the biology community to move beyond using computers for data analysis alone and to fully embrace the potential of computational modeling. Rathkey asserts that an accurate model of the human body could transform how we identify new therapeutics and create a holistic form of personalized medicine.

Third place was shared by Stephanie Ng, a medical fellow at Yale School of Medicine, and Omar Toubat, a medical student at the University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine. Ng examined depression as a final frontier of basic medical exploration. As a disease that impacts more than 350 million people and a leading cause of disability, Ng states that a better understanding of its causes will help improve treatments and relieve suffering for individuals, families, and societies. Omar Toubat advocates in his essay for increased genomic literacy in order to fully understand the potential of the human genome. Further advancing genetic reprogramming of cells, he argues, will be the most significant basic science contribution to regenerative medicine that will contribute to moving human health forward.

To learn more about each of the winners and read each essay in full, please visit: http://www.laskerfoundation.org/

About the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation: Founded in 1942, the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation envisions a healthier world through medical research. It seeks to improve health by accelerating support for medical research through recognition of research excellence, public education, and advocacy. For much of the 20th century, the Foundation was led by Mary Lasker, who was

America's most prominent citizen-activist for public investment in medical research. She is widely credited with motivating the White House and Congress to greatly expand federal funding for medical research, particularly through the NIH. For more information about the Lasker Foundation and its programs, visit http://www.laskerfoundation.org Follow news from the Lasker Foundation on Twitter (@LaskerFDN) and Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/LaskerFDN)