



News Release

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Johnson & Johnson Celebrates COVID-19 Vaccine Science Superheroes

*Katalin Karikó, Ph.D. and Drew Weissman, M.D. Ph.D.
Receive 2021 Dr. Paul Janssen Award for Uncovering Ways to
Safely Use mRNAs in Vaccines and Therapeutics*

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ – September 28, 2021 – Johnson & Johnson today announced Katalin Karikó, Ph.D. of BioNTech Pharmaceuticals and the University of Pennsylvania and Drew Weissman, M.D., Ph.D., of the University of Pennsylvania as winners of the 2021 [Dr. Paul Janssen Award for Biomedical Research](#). The duo were honored for their foundational work that enabled the use of messenger RNA in the development of COVID-19 vaccines, and holds tremendous promise for development of future vaccines and therapeutics.

The company also recognized other scientists from across academia, government and industry who have worked tirelessly since the start of the pandemic to bring COVID-19 vaccines to the world as “Vaccine Science Superheroes” and donated \$100,000 in their honor to [IntraHealth International](#) – a non-profit organization supporting front-line health workers tackling COVID-19.

“Among the dozens of nominations of deserving researchers, the work of Drs. Karikó and Weissman stood out not only for the impact it is already having on the COVID-19 pandemic, but also for the potential it holds for preventing and treating other serious diseases,” said Richard P. Lifton, M.D., Ph.D., President of The Rockefeller University and Dr. Paul Janssen Award committee chair.

Karikó and Weissman were selected as the 2021 winners by an [independent committee](#) of world-renowned scientists. They join [19 scientists](#) who have received the Dr. Paul Janssen Award since 2004, including five who went on to win the Nobel Prize.

“It is a great honor to recognize the work of researchers like Dr. Karikó and Dr. Weissman, and all of the COVID-19 vaccine science superheroes who embody the same curiosity, perseverance and commitment to improving human health as Dr. Paul Janssen,” said Paul Stoffels, M.D., Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee and Chief Scientific Officer, Johnson & Johnson. “They persevered in the face of so many obstacles along their science journey, and today their work is helping save millions of lives all over the world.”

Johnson & Johnson will honor these remarkable scientists during a live webcast program [“Eureka Moments: Vaccine Science Superheroes”](#) on September 28, 2021 at 11:00 a.m. ET

via [Johnson & Johnson's page on LinkedIn](#). The program will showcase the scientists behind the headlines whose Eureka moments are improving human health, including perspectives from Drs. Karikó and Weissman and other scientists involved in developing COVID-19 vaccines including: Dr. Dan Barouch, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center; Professor Sarah Gilbert, Oxford; Dr. Tonya Villafana, AstraZeneca; Dr. Andrea Carfi, Moderna; Drs. Hanneke Schuitemaker¹ and Shirley Sylvester², Johnson & Johnson. The broadcast also will feature a fireside chat about what COVID-19 has taught the world about health equity.

"While I am accepting the Dr. Paul Janssen Award for Biomedical Research, I reflect on my humble beginning, the support of my family, teachers, mentors and colleagues who helped me on my journey," said Dr. Karikó. "I think about all those hard-working fellow scientists who are so passionate about their work and immensely contributed to the success of the COVID-19 mRNA vaccine."

"I am greatly honored to receive this award, but the honor really goes to all basic science researchers who made the modified mRNA-LNP vaccines for COVID-19 possible," said Dr. Weissman.

"Now more than ever, the world needs science to come to the rescue," said Seema Kumar, Global Head, Office of Innovation, Global Health and Scientific Engagement, Johnson & Johnson. "We are pleased to recognize the extraordinary scientists behind the COVID-19 vaccines, and to showcase the dedicated men and women who are behind the lab coat and on the frontlines of the fight against serious diseases. They are a special squad of superheroes. 'Eureka!' moments is our attempt to bring you their stories."

About the Dr. Paul Janssen Award for Biomedical Research

Dr. Paul Janssen was one of the 20th century's most gifted and passionate researchers. He helped save millions of lives through his contribution to the discovery and development of more than 80 medicines, four of which remain on the World Health Organization's list of essential medicines.

The Dr. Paul Janssen Award for Biomedical Research was established by Johnson & Johnson in 2004 to honor the memory of Dr. Paul. Since its inception, the Award has recognized 19 outstanding scientists, five of whom have gone on to win the Nobel Prize for the same work. Winners are chosen by an independent selection committee of the world's most renowned scientists. The Award includes a \$200,000 prize.

Previous winners include:

- 2020 – Lewis Cantley, Ph.D.
- 2019 – Franz-Ulrich Hartl, M.D., and Arthur Horwich, M.D.
- 2018 – James Allison, Ph.D. Nobel Laureate
- 2017 – Douglas Wallace, Ph.D.
- 2016 – Yoshinori Ohsumi, Ph.D. Nobel Laureate
- 2015 – Bert Vogelstein, M.D.
- 2014 – Emmanuelle Charpentier, Ph.D. and Jennifer Doudna, Ph.D. Nobel Laureates
- 2013 – David Julius, Ph.D.
- 2012 – Victor Ambros, Ph.D., and Gary Ruvkun, Ph.D.
- 2011 – Napoleon Ferrara, M.D.
- 2010 – Anthony S. Fauci, M.D. and Erick De Clercq, M.D., Ph.D.
- 2009 – Axel Ullrich, Ph.D.

¹ Janssen Vaccines & Prevention B.V.

² Office of the Chief Medical Officer, Johnson & Johnson

- 2008 – Sri Ravinder Maini, FRCP, FMedSci, FRS and Marc Feldmann, FMedSci, FAA, FRS
- 2006 – Craig Mello, Ph.D., Nobel Laureate

Learn more about The Dr. Paul Janssen Award at www.pauljanssenaward.com

About Johnson & Johnson

At Johnson & Johnson, we believe good health is the foundation of vibrant lives, thriving communities and forward progress. That's why for more than 130 years, we have aimed to keep people well at every age and every stage of life. Today, as the world's largest and most broadly based health care company, we are committed to using our reach and size for good. We strive to improve access and affordability, create healthier communities, and put a healthy mind, body and environment within reach of everyone, everywhere. We are blending our heart, science and ingenuity to profoundly change the trajectory of health for humanity. To learn more, visit www.jnj.com

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