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THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF TRANSPLANTATION ANNOUNCES 2015 ACHIEVEMENT AWARD AND GRANT RECIPIENTS

The American Society of Transplantation (AST) announced the recipients of the 2015 Achievement Awards and the Faculty and Fellowship Grants at the recent American Transplant Congress (ATC) in Philadelphia. The recipients were selected for their achievements and contributions to the AST and to the field of transplantation.

“This year’s award recipients are an inspiring group of transplantation professionals. They have been selected by their peers for the transformative role they have each played in shaping our field,” said AST President Dr. James Allan. “We applaud them for their dedication and success.”

AST Achievement Awards

AST Senior Achievement in Clinical Transplantation Award – Gabriel Danovitch, MD, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA
Dr. Danovitch has contributed more than three decades of service to the field of transplantation and nephrology. He is a world-renowned transplant physician whose work spans the entire spectrum of clinical activities in transplantation, from innovative research to superb patient care.

AST Mentoring Award – Jeffrey Bluestone, PhD, Diabetes Center at University of California, San Francisco
Dr. Bluestone has mentored over eighty students, post-doctoral fellows, and research associates. Thirty of his trainees have gone on to become university-based academicians throughout the United States and abroad. Several of his trainees have become transplantation professionals with leadership positions in the AST, including Dr. Kenneth Newell, immediate past-president.

AST Transplant Advocacy Award – William Applegate, Bryan Cave LLP
Currently the Senior Vice President of Bryan Cave LLP and Director of Government Relations, Mr. Applegate has represented the AST since 1998. As the AST’s federal lobbyist, Mr. Applegate connects AST leadership with key congressional, regulatory, and executive branch decision-makers to support issues relevant to transplantation.

AST Clinician of Distinction Award – Marie Chisholm-Burns, PharmD, MPH, MBA, University of Tennessee College of Pharmacy
Dr. Chisholm-Burns is the founder and director of the Medication Access Program (MAP), which helps people with transplants get the medications they need. Her work focuses on improving outcomes in solid organ transplant recipients through innovative adherence programs.

AST Basic Science Established Investigator Award – Anita Chong, PhD, University of Chicago
Dr. Chong’s scholarly work has shifted several paradigms of transplantation immunology. She currently leads the field with her work on alloreactive B cells and the consequences of infections on transplant tolerance.

AST Clinical Science Established Investigator Award – Atul Humar, MD, MsC, FRCPC, Toronto General Hospital
For more than a decade, Dr. Humar has been recognized as a leader in the field of transplant infectious disease. His research has generated essential data that has helped the development of evidence-based guidances and recommendations that benefit organ transplant recipients around the world.

AST Basic Science Investigator Award – Xunrong Luo, MD, PhD, Northwestern University
Dr. Luo has made important contributions to understanding mechanisms of transplantation tolerance in the clinic. Highlights of her work include the signaling mechanism by which tgf-β modifies tregs, how rapamycin can similarly induce tolerogenic dendritic cells, and how fixed allogenic splenocytes can induce donor-specific tolerance to islet allografts.

AST Clinical Science Investigator Award – Jacqueline O’Leary, MD, MPH, Baylor University
Dr. O’Leary has made significant contributions to the field of transplantation, most notably by reinvigorating and redefining interest in humoral immunity in liver transplantation. In 2013, she co-chaired an AST-supported conference on donor-specific antibodies in liver transplantation, and has since been the thought-leader in this area.

AST Basic Science Career Development Award – Heth Turnquist, PhD, University of Pittsburgh
Dr. Turnquist’s research has identified a previously unknown regulatory capacity of IL-33 that his team aims to use in facilitating induction of transplant tolerance or preventing development of chronic allograft vasculopathy. His work has contributed to our understanding of allograft rejection.

AST Clinical Science Career Development Award – Nicole Theodoropoulos, MD, Ohio State University
Dr. Theodoropoulos has made strong contributions to our understanding of optimal donor screening to prevent the inadvertent transmission of infections to recipients. In a groundbreaking study, she demonstrated that nucleic acid tests could play a beneficial role in identifying donors with either false positive serology or cleared infection.

AST Faculty and Fellowship Grants

AST TIRN/Astellas Clinical Science Faculty Development Research Grant – Cozumel Pruette, MD, MHS, Johns Hopkins University
Dr. Pruette’s research is titled “Improving adherence and satisfaction in adolescent kidney transplant patients with patient-centered communication.” This research project is well-suited to her clinical experience and research interest in assessing the impact of communication on outcomes in pediatric kidney transplantation.

AST TIRN/Astellas Basic Science Fellowship Research Grant – Benjamin Matta, PhD, University of Pittsburgh
Dr. Matta’s research is titled “Countering the deleterious immune-modifying role of IL-33 after transplantation.” His study involves the elucidation of endogenous immunoregulatory and allograft protective mechanisms that can be applied clinically for the benefit of transplant recipients.

AST TIRN/Bristol-Myers Squibb Translational Science Fellowship Research Grant – Blayne Sayed, MD, PhD, Emory University
Dr. Sayed’s research is titled “Epigenetic regulation of CTLA-4 modifies susceptibility to the development of pathogenic T cells mediating a belatacept resistant alloreactive immune response.” His future goals include both clinical practice and basic science research, and his project reflects his interest in epigenetics.

AST TIRN/One Lambda, part of Thermo Fisher Scientific Basic Science Fellowship Research Grant – Beth Amundsen, MD, Massachusetts General Hospital
Dr. Amundsen’s research is titled “Role of TGF-B in interaction between T and B regulatory cells and its potential effects on transplantation tolerance.” With this research project, she seeks to gain new conceptual and technical training in transplantation biology and micro-surgery.

AST TIRN/Wood MacMillan Charitable Fund Transplant Nursing Grant – Dianne LaPointe Rudow, DNP, Mount Sinai Medical School
Dr. LaPointe Rudow’s research is titled “Evaluation of the reliability and validity of the Live Donor Assessment Tool (LDAT) to predict psychosocial outcomes among liver and kidney donors.” Ultimately, she anticipates that incorporation of the LDAT into the psychosocial evaluation will better determine candidacy for donation, determine the need for pre-donation interventions to minimize psychological harm and promote positive donor experiences, and predict donor psychosocial outcomes.

For more information on AST, please visit: www.myAST.org.

About AST
The American Society of Transplantation (AST) is an organization of transplant professionals dedicated to advancing the field of transplantation and improving patient care by promoting research, education, advocacy, and organ donation. The Society comprises more than 3,500 transplant professionals, including physicians, surgeons, scientists, nurses, administrators, and other allied health professionals. For more information about AST, please visit www.myAST.org.