

## Foundation for the NIH Awards 2020 Trailblazer Prize for Clinician-Scientists to Michael Wilson, M.D.

**NORTH BETHESDA, MD, September 18, 2020** – The Foundation for the National Institutes of Health (FNIH) today bestowed its annual Trailblazer Prize for Clinician-Scientists to Michael Wilson, M.D., of the University of California San Francisco (UCSF). Dr. Wilson has received the Trailblazer Prize, along with a \$10,000 honorarium, for pioneering a next-generation diagnostic approach to pinpoint infectious causes of inflammatory conditions of the central nervous system. The Trailblazer Prize is made possible by a generous donation from John I. Gallin, M.D., and Elaine Gallin, Ph.D., to the FNIH.

Now in its third year, the Trailblazer Prize recognizes the outstanding contributions of early career clinician-scientists whose research translates basic scientific observations into new paradigm-shifting approaches for diagnosing, preventing, treating or curing disease and disability.

Dr. Wilson is Associate Professor of Neurology in the Division of Neuroimmunology and Glial Biology at the UCSF Weill Institute for Neurosciences. Bypassing the traditional process of differential diagnosis, Wilson employs the innovative technique of metagenomic next-generation sequencing. This approach efficiently analyzes the genetic material in a patient's sample to precisely identify specific infectious agents causing inflammation while also ruling out irrelevant pathogens that might otherwise have been suspected. Wilson has unearthed key knowledge about the infectious and autoimmune causes of inflammatory conditions in the brain, spinal cord and meninges, including major discoveries such as co-identifying the family of viruses behind acute flaccid myelitis, a paralyzing, polio-like condition affecting children. Wilson's lab is currently applying these novel methods to search for an infectious trigger in multiple sclerosis. Dr. Wilson earned his M.D. and M.A.S. from UCSF.

"Dr. Wilson has developed and applied revolutionary new tools to improve the diagnosis of central nervous system infections like meningitis and encephalitis. His groundbreaking work has led to new insights about infectious and autoimmune diseases, with important implications not only for how individual patients are treated, but for a better understanding of the etiology and pathophysiology of these disorders," said Steven M. Paul, M.D., Chairman of the Board, FNIH.

In lieu of an in-person event to celebrate this achievement, the Trailblazer Prize will be bestowed via the Online Celebration of the 2020 FNIH Awards, an interactive website launched today at <https://awards.fnih.org> to laud Dr. Wilson and the other recipients of 2020 FNIH honors.

"I feel very fortunate to win this award, which is an incredible honor," said Dr. Wilson. "This is a very meaningful recognition of the work that I've done with a phenomenal group of scientists and clinicians. I am fortunate to get to work in an environment that offers close collaboration between the laboratory and the clinical space, and seeing that recognized means quite a lot."

Dr. Wilson was selected as the 2020 Trailblazer Prize recipient by a jury of distinguished biomedical research leaders, chaired by Michael J. Welsh, M.D., Director, Pappajohn Biomedical Institute, University of Iowa. In addition to Dr. Welsh, other members of the esteemed jury include:

- Barry Collier, M.D., Vice President for Medical Affairs, Physician in Chief, David Rockefeller Professor, The Rockefeller University

- Michael Fox, M.D., Ph.D., Associate Professor of Neurology, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Harvard Medical School; 2018 FNIH Trailblazer Prize Recipient
- Helen H. Hobbs, M.D., Professor of Internal Medicine and Molecular Genetics, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center
- John I. Gallin, M.D., NIH Associate Director for Clinical Research and Chief Scientific Officer, NIH Clinical Center
- Crystal Mackall, M.D., Ernest and Amelia Gallo Family Professor of Pediatrics and Internal Medicine, Stanford University
- Steven M. Paul, M.D., Chairman of the Board, FNIH; President and Chief Executive Officer, Karuna Therapeutics, Inc. and Venture Partner at Third Rock Ventures

To view the Online Celebration of the 2020 FNIH Awards, please visit <https://awards.fnih.org>.

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#### **About the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health**

The Foundation for the National Institutes of Health creates and manages alliances with public and private institutions in support of the mission of the NIH, the world's premier medical research agency. The Foundation, also known as the FNIH, works with its partners to accelerate biomedical research and strategies against diseases and health concerns in the United States and across the globe. The FNIH organizes and administers research projects; supports education and training of new researchers; organizes educational events and symposia; and administers a series of funds supporting a wide range of health issues. Established by Congress in 1990, the FNIH is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization. For additional information about the FNIH, please visit <https://fnih.org/>.