



Hope Funds for Cancer Research

Press Release

Lasker Foundation Honors Dr. Joan Steitz for Lifetime Achievement

For Immediate Release
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Newport, RI - September 29, 2018 - Dr. Joan Steitz, Sterling Professor of Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry at Yale University and a 2015 Hope Funds for Cancer Research Award of Excellence recipient, was recently honored by the Lasker Foundation for leadership in RNA biology and scientific mentorship.

The 2018 Lasker-Koshland Special Achievement Award in Medical Science was presented to Dr. Steitz "for four decades of leadership in biomedical science – exemplified by her pioneering discoveries in nuclear RNA, her generous mentorship of hundreds of budding scientists, and her vigorous and passionate support of women in science."

The Lasker Awards, considered America's highest and most distinguished biomedical research honors, recognize the contributions of researchers, clinician scientists, and public servants who have made major advances in the understanding, diagnosis, treatment, cure, or prevention of disease, and were presented September 21st in New York City.

"Hope Funds congratulates Dr. Steitz on this prestigious and well-deserved honor," said Leah Rush Cann, Chair of the Hope Funds Executive Committee. "We are delighted and honored that the mentorships cited in her award continue in part through her continued involvement with Hope Funds fellows." Dr Steitz has served on the Hope Funds Scientific Advisory Council since 2016.

Dr. Steitz was recipient of the Hope Funds Award of Excellence for Basic Science in 2015, and joins a list of fellow honorees who are also Lasker Award recipients: James Allison, PhD, Elizabeth Blackburn, PhD, James Darnell, MD, Bryan Druker, MD, Napoleon Ferrara, MD, Harold Freeman, MD, James F. Holland, MD, Sir Paul Nurse, PhD, Robert Roeder, PhD, Janet Rowley, MD, Phillip Sharp, PhD and Charles Sawyers, MD.

About Joan Steitz, Ph.D.

Dr. Steitz received her Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry from Antioch College and studied molecular biology in Alex Rich's lab at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She was accepted to Harvard Medical School, but having been excited by bench-science in the laboratory of Joseph Gall at the University of Minnesota, she declined the invitation and instead applied to Harvard's program in biochemistry and molecular biology, where she would be the first female graduate student to join the laboratory of James D. Watson. Dr. Steitz completed her postdoctoral research at the University of Cambridge (UK) and in 1970 joined the faculty at Yale. In 1975, she published the research for which she is widely known, demonstrating that ribosomes use complementary base pairing to identify the start sites on bacterial mRNA. Starting in 1979 with her MD/PhD student Michael Lerner, she identified novel cellular entities called snRNPs and defined their roles in splicing. Her later characterization of another kind of snRNP particle, snoRNPs, demonstrated conclusively that introns are not junk-DNA. Dr. Steitz has served in numerous professional capacities, including as scientific director of the Jane Coffin Childs Memorial Fund for Medical Research (1991-2002) and as editorial board member of *Genes & Development*. She has received numerous honors and awards, including the National Medal of Science, and membership in the National Academy of Sciences and the Royal Society of London.



About the Lasker Awards

For 73 years, the Lasker Awards, America's most prestigious biomedical research awards, have recognized the contributions of leaders who made major advances in the understanding, diagnosis, treatment, cure, or prevention of human disease. Recipients of the Lasker Medical Research Awards are selected by a distinguished international jury chaired by Joseph L. Goldstein, recipient of the 1985 Lasker Award for Basic Medical Research and the Nobel Prize in

Physiology or Medicine. Eighty-seven Lasker laureates have received the Nobel Prize, including 40 in the last three decades. More details on the Lasker Award recipients, the full citations for each award category, video interviews and photos of the awardees, and additional information on the foundation are available at [the Lasker Foundation website](#).

About Hope Funds for Cancer Research

The Hope Funds for Cancer Research was formed in 2006 by a group of concerned individuals who have experience in oncology, intellectual property law, investment banking, philanthropy, sociology, and the arts to establish a funding vehicle that would take a rational scientific, medical, and investment approach to granting money to the most interesting and promising research efforts to address the most difficult-to-treat cancers, including pancreatic, lung, liver, sarcomas, esophageal, brain, gastric, and ovarian cancers, and rare lymphomas, leukemias and MDS. These cancers are insidiously aggressive illnesses that kill most of their victims within months, even with aggressive chemotherapy. The Trustees of the Hope Funds for Cancer Research believe that funding research that could lead to breakthroughs in these areas and increase life expectancy in these types of cancers is at the core of our mission. The Hope Funds for Cancer Research is a 509 (a)(1) charity under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service's code. For additional information about the organization, please visit <http://www.Hope-Funds.org> or call 401-847-3286.

Hope Funds for Cancer Research: Advancing Innovative Research in Understudied Cancers

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