Winners of the “2016 International Aspirin Foundation Senior Science Award” announced

Today, Friday, 30 September, three world-class professors from Boston, Massachusetts were the winners of the 2016 International Aspirin Foundation Senior Science Award for their work on the two largest ever randomised trials of aspirin.

Nancy Cook, Michael Gaziano and Julie Buring have led the teams in Boston that have been responsible for the running and subsequent long-term follow-up of the trials of aspirin in prevention of vascular events and other pathology – Physicians’ Health Study and Women’s Health Study. As well as answering key questions about the benefits and risks of aspirin, these trials also developed methodology for conducting large randomized trials to a very high standard at remarkably low cost. Lessons from their pioneering work in this area have influenced the design of subsequent trials of aspirin and many other interventions.

The award which recognizes significant scientific research was open to those who contribute to the scientific knowledge of aspirin/acetylsalicylic acid.

Professor Peter Rothwell FMedSci, chair of the International Aspirin Foundation’s Scientific Advisory Board said of the award: “This prestigious award recognises scientists who endeavour to better understand what this long-established drug can do to improve human health. In terms of reliably determining what aspirin achieves in primary prevention of disease, these three senior investigators on the PHS and WHS trials have each made very major contributions to both scientific understanding and to guiding clinical practice.”

Receiving the award at the presentation ceremony on behalf of the team, Professor Nancy Cook added: “I am honored to receive this award along with my colleagues in Boston. I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to work on questions regarding aspirin in the rich data provided by the PHS and WHS.”

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Notes to editors:
1. For further information about the International Aspirin Foundation click here
2. For further information about the awards click here
3. The Senior Science Award is supported through a sponsorship of Bayer. The sponsor does not have any influence on the nomination and selection of the International Aspirin Foundation Science Awards
4. For headshots click here
5. Background biographies:

Nancy R. Cook
Nancy Cook is Professor of Medicine in the Division of Preventive Medicine, Department of Medicine, at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School. She has broad expertise in clinical trials and observational epidemiology, with particular interests in predictive modelling, hypertension and salt, as well as aspirin.

Dr Cook has been involved as statistician in the PHS and WHS for over 30 years and has made a major contribution to the finding on the effects of aspirin on both cardiovascular disease (CVD) and cancer. She has contributed important methodologic work on self-selection for exposures and implications for causal analyses, particularly her NIH-funded work on causal effects of aspirin on CVD. She has examined the impact of non-compliance on the estimated effect of aspirin on CVD using marginal structural models in both the PHS and WHS.

Dr Cook took the lead on the primary analysis of the randomized effect of aspirin on cancer in WHS, both at the end of the trial period and after further long-term follow-up. Prior meta-analyses of trials of aspirin suggested that there was a delayed impact of aspirin on cancer, particularly colorectal cancer. Dr Cook confirmed this observation in a series of careful analyses that took consideration of methodologic aspects related to colorectal cancer screening, side effects of aspirin, and self-selected post-trial aspirin use.

Dr Cook has also been involved in several other major randomised trials and epidemiological studies, as well as international collaborations on the role of aspirin in disease prevention.

J. Michael Gaziano
John Michael Gaziano is Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and Head of the Division of Aging at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston. He is a practicing physician and a world-leading researcher on the epidemiology of vascular disease, large-scale clinical trials and preventive cardiology. He has made a major contribution to PHS, WHS and ARRIVE at the same time as running a major academic department, a significant clinical practice, major editorial roles and clinical teaching duties at several institutions in Boston.

In addition to his work on the risks and benefits of aspirin in PHS, WHS and ARRIVE, Dr Gaziano has made several other major contributions to large-scale epidemiology, clinical trials and preventive medicine that have helped him to put the use of aspirin in primary prevention of vascular disease in
context, including the better understanding of vascular risk factors and risk prediction tools, the effects of vitamin supplementation on vascular disease and cancer, and the interactions between lifestyle, biochemical and genetic risk factors for vascular disease. Dr Gaziano is the PI on the Physicians’ Health Study II, evaluating vitamin E, vitamin C, beta-carotene and a multivitamin in 15,000 male physicians.

Dr Gaziano has also made major innovations in embedding research in US healthcare systems. He established the Massachusetts Veterans Epidemiology Research and Information Center (MAVERIC), which has grown under his leadership to 140 faculty and staff and an annual budget of $20 million. He is also Director of the recently established the Million Veteran Program, which will be one of the most important “engines” for discovery in epidemiology and genetics over the coming decades.

**Julie E. Buring**
Julie Buring is Professor of Medicine in the Division of Preventive Medicine, Department of Medicine, at Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Harvard Medical School. The primary focus of Dr. Buring’s research has been on the epidemiology of chronic diseases in women, particularly cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Dr Buring was Principal Investigator of the original randomized phase of WHS and is currently PI of the extended observational follow-up of the WHS participants, having had the vision to develop the cohort into a rich resource of phenotypic, biomarker and genetic data to evaluate many outcomes in ancillary studies.

Dr. Buring has been involved in the design, conduct, analysis, and interpretation of several other large-scale randomized clinical trials, including the Women’s Antioxidant Cardiovascular Study, a secondary prevention trial evaluating the roles of vitamin E, vitamin C, beta-carotene and folic acid/B6/B12 among 8,000 women with a prior history of heart disease; the Brigham and Women’s Hospital Vanguard Center of the Women’s Health Initiative, evaluating the roles of low-fat diet, postmenopausal hormones, and calcium/vitamin D supplementation among over 70,000 women nationwide; and the Physicians’ Health Study II. To date she has over 600 publications, with more than 50 directly related to aspirin.