Pioneering Researcher Ali G. Gharavi to Receive Smith Award

Prominent investigator Ali G. Gharavi, MD, will be presented the Homer W. Smith Award on Saturday, November 4. This award recognizes outstanding contributions to understanding how kidneys function in normal and diseased states.

Dr. Gharavi will speak on “Nephrology Practice and Therapeutics Through a Genomic Lens.”

Dr. Gharavi is the Jay Meltz Professor of Nephrology and Hypertension and chief of the Division of Nephrology at the Columbia University Irving Medical Center in New York City. He is also director of the Center for Precision Medicine and Genomics and interim director of the Institute for Genomic Medicine at Columbia University.

Dr. Gharavi’s research is focused on the molecular genetics of kidney diseases. His work has led to the discovery of genes and loci for glomerulonephritis, hypertension, polycystic liver disease, and congenital defects of the kidney and urinary tract. His research has demonstrated the utility of sequencing in the diagnosis and management of patients with nephropathy. His current focus is on the genetics of immunoglobulin A nephropathy (the most common glomerulonephritis) and the genetics of the kidney and the urinary tract (the most common cause of kidney failure in children). His laboratory is also studying the applications of genomic medicine to clinical care for patients with kidney diseases.

Dr. Gharavi has contributed more than 160 publications on the genetics of kidney diseases, and his studies have clarified basic pathophysiology and influenced clinical practice across multiple areas. Dr. Gharavi is the principal investigator of multiple scientific projects funded by the National Institutes of Health.

He has served ASN in many capacities, including chairing abstract reviews for genetics, molecular genetics, and basic and experimental immunology; co-chairing several oral communications sessions, a symposium on genetic tools to study renal function, and a conference on genome engineering; and serving on the Program Committee of an annual meeting. He served on the Board of Directors of the Eastern Chapter of the American Society of Hypertension.

Dr. Gharavi has served on the editorial boards of the American Journal of Physiology—Renal Physiology, Kidney International, and the Journal of Nephrology. He is currently associate editor of JASN.

Among his many honors, he has received the Judson Daland Prize for Outstanding Achievement in Clinical Investigation from the American Philosophical Society, the National Kidney Foundation Clinical Scientist Award, and the Kidney and Urology Foundation Innovator Award.

After receiving his medical degree from The George Washington University, Dr. Gharavi completed his residency in internal medicine and fellowships in hypertension and nephrology at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City. He then completed a postdoctoral fellowship in human genetics at Yale School of Medicine. He joined Columbia University in 2003.

Expert to Share Current Efforts to Combat Emerging Diseases

Erica Ollmann Saphire, PhD, MBA

With the COVID-19 pandemic raising questions about what might be next, a virology researcher will present a fresh perspective on approaching, new diseases at a state-of-the-art lecture on Saturday, November 4.

Erica Ollmann Saphire, PhD, MBA, president and chief executive officer of the La Jolla Institute for Immunology, will speak on “Antibodies Against Emerging Infectious Diseases: Global Collaborations.”

A structural biologist, virologist, and immunologist, Dr. Saphire’s research has examined at the molecular level how and why viruses are pathogenic and provided a roadmap for medical defenses against them. Her team has elucidated the structures of glycoproteins from Ebola, Sudan, Marburg, Bundibugyo, and Lassa viruses; how the viruses mediate entry into cells; how their proteins suppress immune function; and where human antibodies can defeat these viruses.

Her laboratory’s research has further revealed how viral matrix proteins hijack host lipids to polymerize virus assembly and proved that certain viral proteins rearrange into different structures at different times for different functions. A recent discovery in her laboratory revealed why neutralizing antibodies had been so difficult to elicit against the Lassa virus and provided the template for a vaccine. Other work in the laboratory has shown how viruses replicate and assemble using a variety of biophysical, biochemical, and immunological methods.

Dr. Saphire leads the Viral Hemorrhagic Fever Immunotherapeutic Consortium, which is supported by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. The consortium has united 44 previously competing academic, industrial, and government laboratories across five continents to understand and provide antibody therapeutics against Ebola, Marburg, Lassa, and other viruses.

She is also leading a consortium supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to evaluate antibody therapeutics against SARS-CoV-2 to prevent and treat COVID-19.

Dr. Saphire’s work has been recognized by the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers, as well as young investigator awards from the International Conference on Antiviral Research, American Society for Microbiology; and Medical Research Council (MRC) Centre for Virus Research in the United Kingdom. She has received a Fulbright Global Scholar fellowship from the U.S. State Department and a Mercator fellowship from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft to develop international collaborations using cryoelectron microscopy to further global health.

Dr. Saphire received her doctoral degree from Scripps Research. After postdoctoral work at Scripps Research, she joined the faculty there as an assistant professor in 2003 and became a full professor in 2012. She joined the La Jolla Institute for Immunology in 2019.

Michael Emmett to Be Given Robert G. Narins Award for Contributions in Education

Michael Emmett, MD

Michael Emmett, MD, will receive the Robert G. Narins Award for his many efforts in the education and training of the next generation of nephrologists on Saturday, November 4.

Dr. Emmett is chair emeritus of the Department of Internal Medicine at Baylor University Medical Center, clinical professor of internal medicine at Texas A&M Health Science Center School of Medicine, adjunct professor at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical School, and attending physician in internal medicine and pathology at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas. He served as chief of nephrology for 10 years at Baylor.

For more than 40 years, Dr. Emmett’s contributions to the teaching of medical students, residents, fellows, and peers in nephrology and internal medicine have been widely recognized. During his tenure at Baylor, he has participated in the training of more than 100 nephrology fellows and received many Best Teacher of the Year awards.

Dr. Emmett has published numerous peer-reviewed articles and textbook chapters. These publications have advanced the knowledge of the pathophysiology of multivalent ion and potassium disorders in renal disease and influenced the clinical approach to the diagnosis and therapy of patients with advanced kidney diseases.

He has served on the editorial boards of CJASN, Clinical Nephrology, Kidney International, and The American Journal of Cardiology. He served for many years as a member of the Nephrology Board of the American Board of Internal Medicine.

Since 2010, Dr. Emmett has been an editor of the online textbook UpToDate, focusing on nephrology topics and sections on the pathophysiology, diagnosis, and therapy of fluid, electrolyte, and acid-base disorders.

Dr. Emmett received his medical degree from Temple University (Lewis Katz) School of Medicine, followed by a residency at Yale New Haven Medical Center and a nephrology fellowship at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. He joined the faculty at Baylor in 1976.