

Early RNA Investigator to Share Journey of Discovery



Joan A. Steitz, PhD

A researcher who has devoted her career to investigating RNA will give a state-of-the-art lecture, “RNA Biology and Medicine: A Journey of Unexpected Discovery,” on Sunday, Oct. 25. The speaker, Joan A. Steitz, PhD, is Sterling Professor of Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry at Yale University and an investigator at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

Perhaps her biggest breakthrough came in 1979, when Dr. Steitz and her colleagues described a group of cellular particles called small nuclear ribonucleoproteins (snRNPs), a breakthrough in understanding how RNA is spliced. Subsequently, her laboratory defined the structures and functions of other noncoding RNPs, such as those that guide the modification of ribosomal RNAs and microRNAs, as well as several produced by transforming herpes viruses.

She was publishing significant findings as early as 1967, when her doctoral thesis with mentor James Watson examined the test-tube assembly of an RNA bacteriophage (antibacterial virus) known as R17.

Dr. Steitz spent the next three years in postdoctoral studies at the Medical Research Council Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge, England, where she used early methods for determining the biochemical sequence of RNA to study how ribosomes know where to initiate protein synthesis on bacterial mRNAs. In 1970, she was appointed assistant professor of molecular biophysics and biochemistry at Yale, becoming full professor in 1978. She established a laboratory at Yale dedicated to the study of RNA structure and function.

She is an editor of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, associate editor of *RNA*, associate editor of the *Journal of Cell Biology*, and a member of the editorial boards of *Genes and Development* and *Molecular Cell*.

Her many honors include the U.S. Steel Foundation Award in Molecular Biology, National Medal of Science; Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology Excellence in Science Award, RNA Society Lifetime Achievement Award, Gairdner Foundation International Award, Pearl Meister Greengard Prize, the grand medal from the French Academy of Sciences, American Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Herbert Tabor Award, American Chemical Society Biopolymers Murray Goodman Memorial Prize, Jonathan Kraft Prize for Excellence in Cancer Research, and Lasker-Koshland Special Achievement Award in Medical Science of the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation.

Dr. Steitz is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, American Philosophical Society, National Academy of Sciences, and Institute of Medicine. She received her doctorate in biochemistry and molecular biology from Harvard University.

Lectureship to Focus on Patient Safety Metrics in Dialysis



Allison Tong, PhD, MPH

The title of the Celeste Castillo Lee Memorial Lectureship will be “Developing Actionable Patient Safety Outcome Metrics for Dialysis.” Scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 25, the speaker will be Allison Tong, PhD, MPH, a principal research fellow and professor at the Sydney School of Public Health, the University of Sydney in Australia.

Dr. Tong has extensive experience in patient-centered outcomes research in chronic disease, particularly CKD. Her work focuses on patient involvement in research, including in the context of research priority setting, the development of core outcomes for research, and in the co-production of clinical trials. She co-founded and is on the Executive Committee of the global Standardized Outcomes in Nephrology (SONG) Initiative, which aims to establish consensus-based core outcomes across the spectrum of CKD. She established the Patient-Centered Research Network (PACER), which aims to facilitate knowledge exchange, cross-disciplinary collaboration, patient involvement, and innovation in conducting patient-centered outcomes research.

She is associate editor of *CJASN*, the *American Journal of Transplantation*, *American Journal of Kidney Disease*, *Transplantation*, *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, *BMJ Open*, *Nephrology*, and *Research for All*, and is a reviewer for more than a dozen journals.

Among her many activities, she chairs the patient-reported outcomes working group of the European Society of Transplantation and is a member of the patient engagement work group of the International Society of Nephrology Advancing Clinical Trials, the patient-reported outcome measures group of the Australian and New Zealand Dialysis and Transplant Registry, the scientific program and education committee of the Transplantation Society of Australia and New Zealand, and the transplant working group of the Australian Kidney Trials Network.

She has received an award for outstanding mid-career research from the University of Sydney, the Ian McKenzie Award for Outstanding Contribution to Transplantation from the Transplantation Society of Australia and New Zealand, the Kidney Health Australia Prize for the Best Presentation in the Field of Clinical Research, and the Young Investigators Award from the Children’s Hospital at Westmead.

She received a PhD and MPH from the school of public health at the University of Sydney, and master of management in community management from the University of Technology in Australia. She was the recipient of a career development fellowship from the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council.