

Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine Action Award Honorees to be Recognized During Virtual World Stem Cell Summit.

2021 Honorees: NFL Alumni Health, the Klein Family), Feng Zhang, PhD and the Global Immunization Action Network Team (GIANT) and Joseph P. Vacanti, MD.

WINSTON-SALEM, NC, UNITED STATES, June 4, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On June 18, 2021 at 7:00 PM EDT, [Regenerative Medicine Foundation](#) (RMF) will broadcast the [Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine Action Awards](#) as part of the virtual [16th annual World Stem Cell Summit](#) (WSCS) and Wake Forest Institute for Regenerative Medicine and RMF's Regenerative Medicine Essentials Course, June 14-18.

Bernard Siegel, Executive Director of RMF said, "Through the Action Awards, outstanding individuals and organizations are recognized for their devotion to improving health and developing cures through advocacy, innovation, leadership, education and inspiration. This year's honorees are truly an inspiration who have made remarkable contributions to the field. Notable achievements made even more impressive, under the cloud of the global pandemic."

Meet the 2021 honorees:

Advocacy Award: NFL Alumni Health

Founded in 1967 by a small group of successful retired NFL players, NFL Alumni Association (NFL Alumni) is one of the oldest and well-respected retired player organizations in professional sports. More than 15,000 former NFL players are connected with NFL Alumni. In 2020, NFL Alumni launched NFL Alumni Health to expand its efforts to improve the health and wellness of NFL Alumni members, as well as the general community, through informational resources, programs, and services, in line with its mission which includes "Caring for Kids," "Caring for our



Own,” and “Caring for the Community.” NFL Alumni Health activities include its collaboration with CDC to raise awareness of the benefits of getting vaccinated against COVID-19. NFL Alumni Health has also launched a program to educate its membership—and the public—about the potential benefits of regenerative medicine and cell-based therapies, and the questions patients should be asking as they seek out safe, effective and approved treatments. The very future of contact sports in America might depend upon the long-term treatment of our heroes of the gridiron and NFL Alumni Health leads the way.

Leadership & Advocacy Award: Bob Klein, Danielle Klein, Rob Klein

A new multi-billion dollar California ballot initiative to fund stem cell research for better treatments and cures for chronic diseases and illnesses was on the ballot in 2020. All the pundits said it couldn't be done; it just wasn't the time. Against all odds, and during a world altering pandemic, Proposition 14 not only qualified for the November ballot; but, it was passed, authorizing \$5.5 billion in new funding for the continued operation of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM). The California agency's research funding had already led to over 90 clinical trials, and 3,000 peer reviewed published discoveries. However, its funding had been exhausted, leaving highly promising research without the support needed to make it through vital stages of basic research, therapy development, and clinical trials, so that this research will fulfill its principal purpose of benefiting the patients that so desperately need the therapies that will result.

The entire Klein family provided essential leadership. Bob, Danielle and Rob Klein are a family of patient advocates who have made it their mission to ensure funding for stem cell and genetic therapy research remains a priority. Bob and Danielle served as Co-Chairs, and Rob served as the President of the campaign. Prop 14 would have never passed without their tenacity and devotion to the cause. They credit the initiative's passage, in large part, to endorsement from over 100 patient advocacy groups, and a dedicated campaign team fighting for better treatments and cures for their families and loved ones.

Pathfinder Award: Feng Zhang, PhD

Feng Zhang is a molecular biologist who has developed novel molecular technologies for studying the brain. He pioneered the development of CRISPR-cas9 as a genome editing tool and has substantially expanded the use of new CRISPR tools, including RNA-targeting CRISPR-Cas13 systems and CRISPR-associated transposon systems, which can be used for gene insertion. One day, CRISPR might be harnessed to treat and possibly cure debilitating medical conditions such as Sickle Cell Anemia, Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, Huntington's Disease, HIV and cancers. Zhang is currently a core institute member of the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, as well as an investigator at the McGovern Institute for Brain Research at MIT, the James and Patricia Poitras Professor of Neuroscience at MIT, and a professor at MIT, with joint appointments in the departments of Brain and Cognitive Sciences and Biological Engineering. Zhang is also an investigator at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

Education Award: Global Immunization Action Network Team (GIANT)

The Global Immunization Action Network Team (GIANT) works to improve global public health outcomes by combating vaccine hesitancy through effective, sensitive, science-based communication and education. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, their extraordinary team has provided important, credible and factual information for people and communities to embrace immunization with trust and confidence. Without health literacy, public health will fail. GIANT presents a novel and timely topic to the World Stem Cell Summit agenda, Health Literacy: Stem Cell Science, Vaccine Development & Confidence in the Age of the Covid Pandemic and Infodemic.

Lifetime Achievement Award: Joseph P. Vacanti, MD

Dr. Joseph Vacanti is Surgeon-in-Chief and Chief of Pediatric Surgery at Mass General Hospital for Children. He is also Director of the Pediatric Transplant Program and co-director of the MGH Center for Regenerative Medicine. He has been active in clinical innovation and research in the field of regenerative medicine for more than three decades. Dr. Vacanti continues to study the creation of artificial organs using a biodegradable polymer scaffold to develop and shape tissue. Dr. Vacanti was a founding co-president of the Tissue Engineering Regenerative Medicine International Society (TERMIS). RMF recognizes his lifetime of dedication and genius.

Joseph Dawson

Regenerative Medicine Foundation

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