



## PRESS RELEASE

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**Wistar to Honor 2023 Nobel Prize Winner Dr. Katalin Karikó**  
*Helen Dean King Award Ceremony Recognizes the Power of Women in Science*

**PHILADELPHIA — (July 25, 2024)** — The Wistar Institute honors 2023 Nobel Prize laureate in Physiology or Medicine **Katalin Karikó, Ph.D.**, as the 2024 [Helen Dean King Award](#) recipient. Dr. Karikó, professor at the University of Szeged in Hungary and adjunct professor of Neurosurgery at the University of Pennsylvania, is this year's Helen Dean King Award winner and will speak at the annual event at noon (ET) at The Wistar Institute on October 8, 2024.

Wistar's Helen Dean King Award highlights the fundamental role women researchers play in early-stage discovery and biomedical research. Each year, Wistar recognizes women in science as a tribute to geneticist Dr. Helen Dean King, the first woman hired as a Wistar scientist who worked at the Institute from 1909 to 1950. Dr. King's contributions to biomedical research paved the way for women worldwide to create their own scientific legacy.

A testament to the fortitude, wisdom, and vision of Dr. King and early women scientists, Dr. Karikó is the personification of this award. As a biochemist who has spent her career working in the field of mRNA vaccine technology — an area of research that was once misunderstood and underfunded — Dr. Karikó pushed past barriers to follow science and commit to the work she loves.

“Like Helen Dean King, Dr. Karikó was driven to overcome the obstacles thrown in her path during her career, and the result was a profound and lasting impact on the health of humanity with her contributions to the deployment of an mRNA platform used to rapidly develop lifesaving vaccines during the pandemic. Dr. Karikó is a role model not just for every female scientist, but for every scientist who has harnessed their passion for knowledge to allow them to ignore obstacles and persevere,” said Maureen Murphy, Ph.D., deputy director of the Ellen



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and Ronald Caplan Cancer Center and Ira Brind Professor and program leader of Wistar's Molecular & Cellular Oncogenesis Program.

Dr. Karikó received last year's Nobel Prize alongside her longtime colleague Dr. Drew Weissman for their discoveries in mRNA modification technology, which enabled mRNA to be delivered to cells without triggering inflammatory response. This early work led to the development of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna Covid-19 mRNA vaccines that were essential to combatting the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. The same fundamental technology is now being used in more than 250 clinical trials evaluating mRNA for vaccine and many other therapeutic applications.

The daughter of a butcher in Hungary, Dr. Karikó always knew she wanted to be a scientist. She immigrated to the U.S. in 1985 with her husband and young daughter, and together, they started a new life in America and in the lab.

"Laboratories are a wonderful place," Dr. Karikó said in a CBS Sunday Morning interview. "But it is important to go out and educate the public and inspire the next generation of scientists."

The Helen Dean King Award Ceremony is a hybrid event. Tickets for the online ceremony are available at no charge, but registration is required. Registration online will begin August 1st. For more information, visit [wistar.org](https://wistar.org).

#### ABOUT THE WISTAR INSTITUTE

The Wistar Institute is the nation's first independent nonprofit institution devoted exclusively to foundational biomedical research and training. Since 1972, the Institute has held National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated Cancer Center status. Through a culture and commitment to biomedical collaboration and innovation, Wistar science leads to breakthrough early-stage discoveries and life science sector start-ups. Wistar scientists are dedicated to solving some of the world's most challenging problems in the field of cancer and immunology, advancing human health through early-stage discovery and training the next generation of biomedical researchers. [wistar.org](https://wistar.org).



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