

Vaccine champion Dr. Peter Hotez lands one of AMA's highest honors

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Andis Robeznieks

Senior News Writer

COVID-19 vaccine scientist and misinformation antagonist Peter J. Hotez, MD, PhD, was one of four Texas physicians recently honored by the AMA for their work prior to and during the pandemic.

The AMA gave the Scientific Achievement Award to Dr. Hotez, an AMA member who is dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine and co-director of the Texas Children's Hospital Center for Vaccine Development in Houston.

"As a celebrated champion of vaccines, Dr. Hotez is a deserving recipient of this honor," said AMA President Gerald E. Harmon, MD. "His background in developing vaccines for tropical diseases that afflict the world's poorest people proved invaluable as he turned his attention to COVID-19."

As the father of an adult daughter with autism, Dr. Hotez's personal life gives him a special platform as a vaccine champion against the movement to falsely link vaccines with autism and led to the title of his 2018 book, *Vaccines Did Not Cause Rachel's Autism*.



Peter Hotez, MD, PhD.

“Dr. Hotez frequently writes for lay audiences and has been an extremely visible and straightforward presence on television, bringing science to the vaccine discussion,” said Dr. Harmon, a family physician in South Carolina. “His affable manner and willingness to speak out for vaccines have made him a man for our times.”

Dr. Hotez’s lab, which develops vaccines not financially viable for pharmaceutical companies, has been studying the coronavirus for a decade. The lab’s COVID-19 vaccine—Corbevax—was granted emergency use authorization in India in December.

Stepping up and facing challenges



Victor J. Test, MD.

For his efforts on behalf patients and his community during the COVID-19 pandemic, Victor J. Test, MD, was given the AMA Medal of Valor—which honors physicians who demonstrate courage under extraordinary circumstances in nonwartime situations. Dr. Test is pulmonary division chief and critical care medicine professor at Texas Tech University in Lubbock.

“Resources can be scarce in West Texas, particularly during a pandemic, and Dr. Test set out to help fix that,” Dr. Harmon said.

“He personally searched for, found, and purchased personal protective equipment to supply the critical care faculty and fellows at the Texas Tech University hospital where he teaches and practices,” Dr. Harmon added. “During an incredibly challenging period for all physicians and across our health care system, Dr. Test stepped up and performed bravely and valiantly, protecting his colleagues and patients.”

Dr. Test also served as a principal investigator in a Mayo Clinic-led study of convalescent serum therapy in COVID-19 patients. In addition, he took calls 24/7 for patients for the entire West Texas region, and personally called every hospital patient's family each evening with updates.

"Physicians, nurses, residents, and patients witnessed his unflagging kindness, ingenuity, generosity, and caring," Dr. Harmon said. "He belongs in the pantheon of health care heroes of this pandemic."

Two others honored

Drs. Hotez and Test were honored during the 2022 Texas Medical Association (TMA) Winter Conference held virtually in late January.



David L. Lakey, MD.

The AMA Foundation Award for Health Education went to David L. Lakey, MD, vice chancellor for health affairs and chief medical officer at The University of Texas System, in recognition of his professional and public health education activities.

Dr. Lakey was commissioner of the Texas Department of State Health Services from 2007–2015 and served as the state's chief health official during hurricanes Ike, Gustav and Dolly. He serves as an adviser on COVID-19 for the state and sits on the TMA COVID-19 task force.



Ellen M. Friedman, MD.

The AMA Foundation Award for Leadership in Medical Ethics and Professionalism went to Ellen M. Friedman, MD. She is director of the Baylor College of Medicine Center for Professionalism in Medicine in Houston.

Dr. Friedman was recognized for her dedication to the principles of medical ethics and the highest standards of medical practice, and also for making an outstanding contribution through active service in medical ethics activities.