



American Heart Association awards \$2 million to fund leading heart researchers

The Association's newly selected Merit Awards focus on how stress affects the brain and how the heart directs body fat to respond to certain conditions

DALLAS, April 3, 2018 — Research into how stress affects the brain and how these changes may affect the heart and translational research focused on molecular signaling by the heart both got significant support from the American Heart Association.

The American Heart Association issued two Merit Awards, each totaling \$1 million to be distributed over five years, to two innovative researchers: Walter Koch, Ph.D., the W.W. Smith Endowed Chair in Cardiovascular Medicine from the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University, and Michelle Albert, M.D., a professor of medicine and the director of the Center for the Study of Adversity and Cardiovascular Disease at the University of California, San Francisco.

“The goal of the merit award program is to support visionary leaders who are undertaking high-risk projects whose outcomes could revolutionize the treatment for cardiovascular disease in the era of precision medicine,” said Ivor Benjamin, M.D., president-elect of the American Heart Association and professor and director of the Cardiovascular Center at Froedtert & Medical College of Wisconsin.

The American Heart Association, the world's leading voluntary health organization devoted to fighting cardiovascular disease, has funded more than \$4 billion in cardiovascular research since 1949.

“For me personally, this award means a lot in terms of being recognized by an organization I love and am committed too. Further, it provides critical support for an exciting project – it appears the heart is an endocrine organ secreting substances that can regulate distant tissues and organs,” Koch said.

“We are finding that the heart can ‘talk’ to fat and alter pathways in heart muscle cells that change what is secreted and changes how fat responds to certain conditions,” Koch added. “This funding will go a long way to further this research.”

Albert, a cardiologist with expertise in preventive cardiovascular medicine, specializes in managing the most critically ill heart patients suffering a range of conditions, including coronary artery disease, heart valve disorders and heart muscle issues.

“The American Heart Association's Merit Award will help facilitate a targeted obesity intervention focused on social determinants of health using a pragmatic public health approach in collaboration with the YMCA-San Francisco. We are interested in answering important, clinically relevant patient-centered questions and are focused on obesity and adversity among socially disadvantaged persons,” Albert said.

Additional Resources:

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About the American Heart Association

The American Heart Association is devoted to saving people from heart disease and stroke – the two leading causes of death in the world. We team with millions of volunteers to fund innovative research, fight for stronger public health policies and provide lifesaving tools and information to prevent and treat these diseases. The Dallas-based association is the nation’s oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke. To learn more or to get involved, call 1-800-AHA-USA1, visit heart.org or call any of our offices around the country. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Inquiries: 1-800-AHA-USA1 (242-8721)
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