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Baruch S. Blumberg Institute Announces W. Thomas London Distinguished Professorship

Dr. W. Thomas London helped discover the hepatitis B virus 50 years ago with Dr. Baruch S. Blumberg and is honored by the Hepatitis B Foundation's research institute for his transformational contributions

DOYLESTOWN, Pa. (October 2015) – The Baruch S. Blumberg Institute, established by the Hepatitis B Foundation to fulfill its research mission, is pleased to announce the creation of the W. Thomas London Distinguished Professorship and its inaugural presentation to leading hepatitis B researcher Dr. Ju-Tao Guo.

The professorship is named in honor of W. Thomas London, M.D., in recognition of his transformational contributions to the discovery of the hepatitis B virus and his unwavering commitment to the elimination of this devastating liver disease, which kills nearly 1 million people each year. The World Health Organization estimates that more than 240 million people worldwide are chronically infected with the hepatitis B virus.

“For more than half a century, Dr. London has represented the very best in a doctor and scientist – sincere compassion and outstanding research to advance the cause of and cure for hepatitis B infection,” said Timothy Block, Ph.D., president and co-founder of the Baruch S. Blumberg Institute and the Hepatitis B Foundation. “The W. Thomas London Distinguished Professorship is imbued from the outset with a legacy of scientific integrity and achievement that will inspire the occupants of this professorial chair for generations to come.”

Serving as vice president of the Hepatitis B Foundation Board of Directors, Dr. London is an internationally renowned physician-scientist who has dedicated his entire professional career to the study of hepatitis B and to the care of those who live with this chronic liver disease.

In the early 1960s, Dr. London was a crucial member of the research team that first identified the hepatitis B virus and then developed first the blood test to detect infection and then the vaccine. His long-term collaboration with Dr. Baruch S. Blumberg, who won the Nobel Prize for his discovery of the hepatitis B virus, led to breakthrough epidemiological, clinical, and virological studies of hepatitis B and its link to primary liver cancer, or hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC).

Dr. London reported the association of what was then called the Australia antigen with acute hepatitis, and then, together with colleagues, the association with chronic hepatitis. The Australia antigen was named the hepatitis B virus, as a hepatitis A virus already had been identified. He showed that chronic hepatitis B infections were endemic among patients in hemodialysis units, while staff members who became infected developed acute hepatitis. This was the first demonstration of the role of the immune system in determining the type of hepatitis a person developed.

In 1966, Dr. London left the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to join Dr. Blumberg at the Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia, where he went on to become a senior member of the Division of Population Science, director of the Liver Cancer Prevention Center, and then chairman of the Institutional Review Board. He retired from Fox Chase in 2009 and currently serves as an advisor to the public health programs of the Hepatitis B Foundation, which is building on his 20-year NIH-funded

research in Haimen City, China. The foundation has undertaken a series of projects focused on citywide public education, screening and referral to medical care, and a patient empowerment program to improve health outcomes among those chronically infected with the hepatitis B virus.

The inaugural recipient of the W. Thomas London Distinguished Professorship is Ju-Tao Guo, M.D., Director of Experimental Therapeutics at the Baruch S. Blumberg Institute. Dr. Guo is a leader in the field of hepatitis B research and worked closely with Dr. London and other leading hepatitis scientists at the Fox Chase Cancer Center prior to joining the Blumberg Institute. Dr. Guo has been conducting antiviral research and study on the molecular pathogenesis of hepatitis viruses, flaviviruses and human coronaviruses for more than 30 years.

"Even before I had the opportunity to work in the department chaired by Dr. London at Fox Chase Cancer Center, I was well aware of his contributions to the field of virology and infectious diseases. He encouraged me with wise advice on each of the important turning points in my career," said Dr. Guo. "To be the first occupant of the W. Thomas London Professorship is both an enormous compliment and an enormous responsibility. It's not an honor I would have presumed to bestow upon myself, but it is one I humbly and graciously accept. I will endeavor to meet the standard set by his legacy."

"I have followed Dr. Guo's work for years and there is no one I would rather see benefit from the creation of this endowed chair than him," said Dr. London, noting that the position offers the chosen scientist 10 years of funding. "He has developed some very unique approaches to eradicating the virus from the inside of a liver cell, and now he has 10 years of financial support to continue that work. That is time he can devote to the science and not to grant-writing, and that gives him a better chance than almost anyone else at bringing us to a world without hepatitis B infection."

Dr. London is a graduate of Oberlin College and Cornell University Medical College. He received his clinical training in Internal Medicine at Bellevue Hospital and the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City. He lives in Wyncote, Pennsylvania, with his wife; they have four married daughters and many grandchildren.

Dr. Guo received his medical training at Lanzhou University School of Medicine in China and postdoctoral training at Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia. He lives in Lansdale, Pennsylvania, with his wife and two daughters.

The W. Thomas London Distinguished Professorship was formally announced October 1 during a special program and reception hosted by the Baruch S. Blumberg Institute at the Pennsylvania Biotechnology Center in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Mrs. Jean Blumberg and her daughters Anne and Jane joined the celebration to honor Dr. London, who had worked so closely with Dr. Blumberg for nearly 50 years on the problem of hepatitis B.

About the Baruch S. Blumberg Institute: The Hepatitis B Foundation established an independent, nonprofit research institute in 2003 in order to conduct discovery research and nurture translational biotechnology in an environment conducive to interaction, collaboration and focus. The research center was renamed in 2013 to honor Dr. Baruch S. Blumberg, the man who won the Nobel Prize for his discovery of the hepatitis B virus. To learn more, visit www.blumberginstitute.org.

About the Hepatitis B Foundation: Headquartered in Doylestown, Pa., the Hepatitis B Foundation is the only national nonprofit organization solely dedicated to finding a cure for hepatitis B and improving the quality of life for those affected worldwide through research, education and patient advocacy. To learn

more, go to <http://www.hepb.org>, read our blog at <http://wp.hepb.org>, follow us on Twitter [@HepBFoundation](https://twitter.com/HepBFoundation), find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/hepbfoundation or call 215-489-4900.

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