



**Baruch S. Blumberg Institute Congratulates Michael J. Sofia on Receiving the
2016 Lasker-DeBaakey Clinical Medical Research Award**

*Blumberg Institute professor receives celebrated scientific honor for his discovery of the
cure for chronic hepatitis C infection*

DOYLESTOWN, Pa. (September 2016) – The [Baruch S. Blumberg Institute](#), the research arm of the Hepatitis B Foundation, is proud to announce that Michael J. Sofia, Ph.D., will receive the 2016 Lasker-DeBaakey Clinical Medical Research Award for his role in the discovery of the cure for chronic hepatitis C. Sofia is a resident adjunct professor at the Baruch S. Blumberg Institute and Chief Scientific Officer of Arbutus Biopharma, which now is focusing on developing a cure for hepatitis B.

The Lasker Awards rank among the world's most celebrated scientific honors for biomedical research and many consider them America's Nobel Prizes; in fact, 86 past Lasker awardees have gone on to receive the Nobel Prize.

Sofia will receive the 2016 Lasker-DeBaakey Award on Sept. 23 along with Charles Rice, Ph.D., of Rockefeller University and Ralf Bartenschlager, Ph.D., of Heidelberg University, who were recognized for their work in developing systems essential to hepatitis C research, which Sofia used in developing the drug, sofosbuvir. His work on sofosbuvir was performed while he was at the Princeton-N.J.-based company Pharmasset, which later was acquired by Gilead Sciences.

"The discovery of sofosbuvir was a team effort, and I am honored and humbled to be receiving this recognition," Sofia said. "It is gratifying to see the tremendous good that came from this work."

Chronic infection with the hepatitis C virus (HCV) is a major cause of liver cirrhosis and liver cancer. More than 170 million people worldwide, including 4 million Americans, are chronically infected with HCV, which was thought to be incurable just 10 years ago. Today, with just 12 weeks of treatment with drug combinations that use Sofia's drug, sofosbuvir (Sovaldi®) as the backbone of Harvoni®, almost all those treated are cured. There remains no vaccine to prevent infection with HCV.

Today, Sofia serves on the faculty of the Baruch S. Blumberg Institute, the research institute of the Hepatitis B Foundation, and is Chief Scientific Officer of Arbutus Biopharma. He and his team now are focused on developing a cure for chronic hepatitis B infection, and he is cautious but optimistic about their prospects.

"A cure for hepatitis B also will need a team approach," Sofia said. "Hepatitis B is difficult, but we and the Blumberg Institute have brought together some of the best scientists in the world to achieve this goal. We have put the hepatitis B virus in our crosshairs, and we won't let it get away."

Timothy Block, Ph.D., president of the Hepatitis B Foundation and its Blumberg Institute as well as the PA Biotechnology Center, where both are headquartered, said "We are honored and excited that our colleague, Dr. Sofia, is receiving this recognition, which is so well-deserved. The cure for hepatitis C is one of the greatest medical advances of my lifetime, and we have high hopes for an encore performance with the hepatitis B virus."

“The presentation of the Lasker-DeBakey Award to Dr. Sofia also highlights the extraordinary caliber of the scientists affiliated with the Blumberg Institute and the Biotech Center,” Block continued. “Eight men and women associated with the Biotech Center have discovered drugs and diagnostic assays that are in human use today – and more innovations lie ahead.”

The Baruch S. Blumberg Institute was created by the Hepatitis B Foundation to support research to find a cure for hepatitis B and related liver diseases. The hepatitis B virus, which chronically infects more than 240 million people worldwide, causes cirrhosis and is the world’s leading cause of liver cancer.

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

About the Hepatitis B Foundation: The Hepatitis B Foundation is the nation’s leading 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 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.

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