



Awards
for
Medical
Research

25th
Anniversary

MetLife Foundation

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**METLIFE FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES MAJOR AWARDS TO SCIENTISTS
FOR RESEARCH IN ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE
ALZHEIMER'S SURVEY FINDINGS RELEASED**

(New York, NY, February 24, 2011) – The 25th anniversary presentation of the MetLife Foundation Awards for Medical Research in Alzheimer's Disease (AD) was held today honoring two noted



Dr. Marcus E. Raichle, Dr. Randy L. Buckner.

researchers, [Randy L. Buckner, Ph.D.](#), professor of Psychology and of Neuroscience at Harvard University and Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, and [Marcus E. Raichle, M.D.](#), professor of radiology and neurology at Washington University School of Medicine in St Louis. Both have been pioneers in the area of brain imaging leading to inroads in the study of Alzheimer's.

The awards presentation, with actor and Alzheimer's advocate [David Hyde Pierce](#) as keynote speaker, was accompanied by the release of a MetLife Foundation survey revealing that Americans' fear of Alzheimer's is second

only to cancer. Even more alarming, the data indicates that few have made preparations for the onset of the disease suffered by 5.3 million Americans. Most adults (62%) admit that they know little or nothing about Alzheimer's disease. A report on "What America Thinks: The MetLife Foundation Alzheimer's Survey," can be found at: <http://www.metlife.com/alzheimers>.

"Today, we salute two outstanding scientists who take their place among a leading group of researchers recognized for developing methods to combat and, perhaps someday, prevent Alzheimer's disease from impacting future generations," said [C. Robert Henrikson](#), chairman, president and chief executive officer of [MetLife, Inc.](#) "MetLife Foundation is proud of these awards, which for over two decades have supported the crucial work of leading scientists in Alzheimer's research."

Research from the Awards Recipients

Both Drs. Buckner and Raichle have been leaders in the field of brain imaging, essential to advanced study of Alzheimer's disease.

The major interest of Dr. Buckner's laboratory is the study of human thought and its disruption in diseases like Alzheimer's. Dr. Buckner's breakthrough contribution came in the mid-1990s when he developed a new technique for tracking brain activity. The technique, called event-related functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), improved on previous imaging methods so researchers could observe a memory materializing in a matter of seconds. Using his new technique, Dr. Buckner led an extensive research effort to characterize brain systems important to memory and cognition.

One of his most significant findings was the identification of activity patterns in specific regions of the brain during memorization tests that can predict if someone will remember an individual word. Essentially, Dr. Buckner is able to read his subjects minds. Using these methods, he went on to map a system across various areas of the brain that specialize in memory function. These maps of brain activity in healthy individuals form an understanding of the degeneration of brain cells in Alzheimer's.

For nearly 40 years, Dr. Raichle has been producing brain imaging research contributing to the way Alzheimer's is now diagnosed and treated. Since joining the faculty of Washington University in St. Louis in 1971, he has helped develop the fundamental set of tools that allow researchers to visualize mental activity in the human brain.

Among Dr. Raichle's major accomplishments was his lab's discovery of brain regions now referred to as the default mode network. Dr. Raichle's team observed that imaging a person's brain while it is not engaged with the external world shows a specific brain activity pattern. These patterns are distributed across the brain, including memory systems and frontal systems. Dr. Raichle went on to focus on the intrinsic functional activity of the brain in its default mode as distinct from the activity evoked by behavioral or task-related events. His team's measurements of brain energy consumption indicate that more than 95 percent of the energy used by the brain is burned by this default activity.

Survey Findings

"*What America Thinks*," conducted by [Harris Interactive](#), found that most people are not preparing for the strong possibility that they or their family members will develop Alzheimer's, despite significant fear of the disease. When asked which of five major diseases they fear most, Alzheimer's disease was second (31%) behind cancer (41%), but far ahead of heart disease (8%), stroke (8%) and diabetes (6%). The survey was conducted by telephone with 1,007 adults in September 2010; it follows similar research from 2006, the year of the 20th MetLife Foundation awards presentation. The current study found:

- 44 percent of adults have family members or friends with Alzheimer's disease.
- Nearly a quarter (23%) of adults are extremely or very concerned that they may someday provide care for a loved one with Alzheimer's, an increase from 18% in 2006.
- Only 18 percent of adults say they have made any plans for the possibility of getting Alzheimer's disease, compared to 12 percent in 2006. Fewer than half of all adults claim to have talked to their families about Alzheimer's disease (41%).
- Thirty-three percent have considered what care options would be available to them in the event of AD; 44 percent have designated who would take care of them. Slightly more than one in five (21%) adults claims to have made any financial arrangement for the possibility of AD onset.

Awards for Medical Research in Alzheimer's Disease

Since 1986, MetLife Foundation has granted awards to scientists demonstrating significant contributions to the understanding of Alzheimer's. The program's goal is to recognize the importance of basic research with an emphasis on providing scientists the opportunity to pursue ideas. Each winner received a \$200,000 research grant for his institution and a personal prize of \$50,000.

According to recent estimates, the number of Americans aged 65 and older with Alzheimer's disease is estimated to reach 7.7 million in 2030 – a greater than 50 percent increase from today. Alzheimer's costs related to health care and long-term care services in 2010 were approximately \$172 billion, according to the Alzheimer's Association.

"For 25 years we have been honoring those who have dedicated their careers to studying Alzheimer's," said Dennis White, president and chief executive officer of [MetLife Foundation](#). "It's gratifying to see

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how much has been accomplished in a quarter century, although there's still a long way to go. The best hope we have of finding a cure is through the work of outstanding scientists as those we honor today."

The awards program included a research briefing by the recipients moderated by [Donald Price, M.D.](#), Professor of Pathology, Neurology and Neuroscience at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. "Alzheimer's disease research is crucial to saving an aging population and the legions of those with dementia," said Dr. Price. "Through these awards, MetLife Foundation has demonstrated a quarter of a century of support for scientists working to unravel the mystery of Alzheimer's by providing them with the funds to freely pursue their life-saving ideas."

About the Award for Medical Research Winners

[Randy L. Buckner, Ph.D.](#) is Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at Harvard University and Investigator of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. He is also Director for Psychiatric Neuroimaging Research at Massachusetts General Hospital. Dr. Buckner received his Ph.D. in neuroscience from Washington University in 1995 under the direction of Dr. Steven Petersen and his fellow awardee, Dr. Raichle. He trained at Mass General and became Instructor of Radiology at Harvard Medical School. In 1997, he became Assistant Professor of Psychology, Radiology, and Neurobiology at Washington University in St. Louis. Dr. Buckner was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure in 2000 before returning to Harvard in 2005. He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, the Association for Psychological Science and the Society for Experimental Psychologists. He received the Wiley Young Investigator Award from the Organization of Human Brain Mapping in 1999, the Young Investigator Award from the Cognitive Neuroscience Society in 2002, and the 2007 Troland Research Award from the National Academy of Sciences.

[Marcus E. Raichle, M.D.](#) is professor of Radiology and Neurology at Washington University School of Medicine in St Louis and Director of the Neuroimaging Laboratories of the university's Mallinckrodt Institute of Radiology. Born in Hoquiam, Washington in 1937, Dr. Raichle received his B.S. (1960) and M.D. (1964) at the University of Washington in Seattle. He did his medical internship and residency at Baltimore City Hospital and The Johns Hopkins Hospital (1964-66), a residency in Neurology at The New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center (1966-69) and served two years in the U.S. Air Force as a flight surgeon. In 1971 he joined Washington University School of Medicine where he became a full professor. Among his many honors elections to the Institute of Medicine (1992), the National Academy of Sciences (1996), the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1998); the Bristol-Myers Award for Distinguished Achievement in Neuroscience (1999); the Grawemeyer Award for Psychology (inaugural recipient, 2001); the University of Washington School of Medicine Distinguished Alumni Award (2006); and the Ralph W. Gerard Prize in Neuroscience from the Society for Neuroscience (2008).

About MetLife Foundation

[MetLife Foundation](#) was established in 1976 by MetLife to carry on its long tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. For more than 20 years, MetLife and MetLife Foundation have invested more than \$19 million for Alzheimer's research and public information programs, including over \$12 million through the *Awards for Medical Research in Alzheimer's Disease* program. The Foundation has also supported a number of major initiatives, including the PBS documentary *The Forgetting: A Portrait of Alzheimer's*; short pocket films on Alzheimer's narrated by David Hyde-Pierce; an educational initiative with the National Institute on Aging's Alzheimer's Disease Centers; the film *Alzheimer's Disease: Facing the Facts*; and initiatives that include caregiving videos, Alzheimer's toolkits and resources for the Hispanic community.

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