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Army Scientist Nominated for 2012 Service to America Medal

Dr. Arthur M. Friedlander, who has directed the development of new and promising vaccines for the nation's biodefense, is one of 33 finalists for the Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medal. Friedlander is the senior scientist at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) at Fort Detrick, Md.

The awards, sponsored by the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service, are given to outstanding federal employees who work behind the scenes to advance the health, safety and well-being of Americans. Finalists will be honored in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday, May 9, as part of Public Service Recognition Week, and medal recipients will be announced on September 13, according to the organization.

Sometimes called the "Oscars" of government service, the Service to America Medals are considered by many to be the most prestigious awards bestowed upon U.S. civil servants. Friedlander, a finalist in the Homeland Security category, has spent his 32-year career unraveling the mysteries of anthrax and plague infection and developing effective vaccines and therapies for these biological threats of national importance.

According to COL Andrea Stahl, USAMRIID's deputy commander, Friedlander's contributions to the field began in the early 1980s. His work shed light on how anthrax toxins bind to and damage host cells, and led to the development of a cellular and molecular model that is currently being used to evaluate new vaccines and therapies.

Beginning in 1990, Friedlander's research established the definitive evidence in animal models for effective post-exposure antibiotic treatment to prevent inhalational anthrax. These studies had wide-ranging impact: They formed the basis for the Department of Defense's preventive medicine policy for managing potential aerosol anthrax exposures; led to adoption of the same management recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and resulted in Food and Drug Administration approval of a new antibiotic for post-exposure preventive treatment of the civilian community.

Friedlander also directed the USAMRIID research team that developed a new anthrax vaccine, which was shown to be highly protective in animal models of inhalational anthrax. That work led to the development of new anthrax vaccines that are currently in human clinical trials under the auspices of the National Institutes of Health. In addition, he led the research effort that culminated in the development of a new multi-component plague vaccine at USAMRIID. This product, proven effective against pneumonic plague in animal models, also is currently in human clinical trials.

"Art continues to take an active role in biodefense research," Stahl commented. "Ordinarily, someone in his position would direct the research program but remain above day-to-day laboratory operations. Art works side by side with junior investigators to develop their skills while addressing complex scientific issues."

Friedlander earned his undergraduate degree from Harvard and his MD from the University of Pittsburgh. He first became interested in microbiology during his college years, and spent summers doing research. Later, while interning at an inner city hospital in Brooklyn, NY, he decided to make the study of infectious diseases his life's work. In 1979, he came to USAMRIID on active duty to work in the Army's infectious disease research program.

As an Army scientist, Friedlander was a strong leader and mentor for civilian and military investigators at USAMRIID. During his military career, he served as Chief, Airborne Diseases; Chief, Department of Pathobiology; and Chief, Bacteriology. In his current role as Senior Scientist, Friedlander provides consultation and guidance to the USAMRIID Commander, the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command leadership, and the Department of Defense's Chemical and Biological Defense Program.

Friedlander is a Fellow of the Infectious Diseases Society of America and a recipient of the Department of the Army Research and Development Achievement Award and the Jay P. Sanford Award in Infectious Diseases from the Armed Forces Infectious Diseases Society. He also serves as Adjunct Professor of Medicine at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. He has published over 130 research papers and book chapters, and is the most highly cited author in Bioterrorism Research for the period 1999-2008.

USAMRIID's mission is to protect the warfighter from biological threats and to be prepared to investigate disease outbreaks or threats to public health. Research conducted at USAMRIID leads to medical solutions—vaccines, drugs, diagnostics, and information—that benefit both military personnel and civilians. The Institute plays a key role as the lead military medical research laboratory for the Defense Threat Reduction Agency's Joint Science and Technology Office for Chemical and Biological Defense. USAMRIID is a subordinate laboratory of the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command.

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