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Michael DeBaun, MD, MPH, and Robert P. Hebbel, MD, to Present 2014 American Society of Hematology Ernest Beutler Lecture

(WASHINGTON, July X, 2014) – The American Society of Hematology (ASH) will honor Michael DeBaun, MD, MPH, of Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, and Robert P. Hebbel, MD, of the University of Minnesota Medical School with the 2014 Ernest Beutler Lecture and Prize for their significant research advances in the area of sickle cell disease.

The Ernest Beutler Lecture, named for the late Ernest Beutler, MD, a past president of ASH and physician-scientist for more than 50 years, is a two-part lectureship that recognizes major translational advances related to a single topic. The award honors two individuals, one who has enabled advances in basic science and another for achievements in clinical science or translational research.

Drs. DeBaun and Hebbel will present their lecture, “Sickle Cell Disease: Improved Understanding but Continued Challenges,” at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, December 8, at the 56th ASH Annual Meeting and Exposition in San Francisco. During their lecture, Dr. DeBaun will discuss the significance and optimal treatment of silent strokes in students with sickle cell disease, as well as opportunities to combine culturally sensitive patient-oriented research with humanitarian efforts in Nigeria. Dr. Hebbel will describe his initial observations of sickle red cell adhesivity to the vascular endothelium and subsequent investigations that have resulted in ongoing therapeutics development focused on a specific “chokepoint” facet of sickle vascular biology.

Dr. DeBaun, the recipient of the 2014 Ernest Beutler Prize in Clinical Science, is Vice Chair of Clinical Research and the JC Peterson Endowed Chair in the Department of Pediatrics at Vanderbilt University. He is the founder and director of Vanderbilt-Meharry Center for Excellence in Sickle Cell Disease, a medical home model in a community health center for individuals with sickle cell disease care across their life span. After earning a medical degree and master’s degree in health services research from Stanford University, he then completed a residency in Pediatrics and a fellowship in Pediatric Hematology-Oncology at St. Louis Children’s Hospital and Washington University School of Medicine. He went on to earn a Master of Public Health degree from The Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health and completed a cancer epidemiology fellowship at the National Cancer Institute. Upon completion of his training, he returned to Washington University from 1996 to 2010 and was later recruited to Vanderbilt to create the new sickle cell center.

Dr. DeBaun is an acknowledged international leader in applications of clinical science to the care of individuals with sickle cell disease. His sickle cell disease research is focused on two areas, elucidating the epidemiology, etiology, and optimal therapy for cerebrovascular injury and asthma (obstructive lung disease). In Nigeria and Ghana, he is presently leading an effort to improve the care of children and adults...
with sickle cell disease and mentoring the next generation of African physicians with a focus on sickle cell disease.

In addition to his critical contributions to understanding the importance and treatment of silent strokes and asthma in sickle cell disease, Dr. DeBaun has become a visible leader among his colleagues through service in professional societies. He has served many different roles for ASH, including his current role as Chair of ASH’s Committee on Promoting Diversity and has also served as a faculty member and past director of ASH’s Clinical Research Training Institute. Dr. DeBaun is an elected member of the American Society for Clinical Investigation, the Association of American Physicians, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Dr. Hebbel, the recipient of the 2014 Ernest Beutler Prize for Basic Science, is Regents Professor and Clark Professor of Medicine at the University of Minnesota Medical School, where he is the former Director of UM’s Vascular Biology Center. He earned his medical degree from the University of Minnesota in 1973 and completed his internship and residency at the University of Washington. Dr. Hebbel returned to the University of Minnesota in 1976 to complete a fellowship in Hematology/Oncology and has remained there ever since.

Through his formative research accomplishments, Dr. Hebbel is credited with redefining the study of sickle cell disease, broadening our understanding from a narrow look at the biophysics of hemoglobin to include an appreciation of vascular endothelial pathobiology. His observation that sickled red blood cells are abnormally adherent to endothelial cells, first reported at the Plenary Scientific Session at the 1978 ASH Annual Meeting and Exposition and later published in the *Journal of Clinical Investigation* in 1980, led to numerous discoveries that eventually led to an understanding of sickle cell disease as a unique vascular disorder. This evolution of thought has not been limited to a single research approach but has been enabled by the use of molecular, cellular, animal, and clinical tools. Through his abundant basic scientific contributions, Dr. Hebbel has engendered multiple distinct areas of sickle cell research and numerous opportunities for new research careers.

The importance of Dr. Hebbel’s work is evidenced through the publication of his research in more than 200 book chapters, reviews, editorials, and peer-reviewed research articles. He is a member of ASH as well as the Central Society for Clinical Research, American Federation for Medical Research, American Society for Clinical Investigation, and the American Association of Physicians.

“The work of Drs. DeBaun and Hebbel has allowed for a vastly improved understanding of sickle cell disease and exemplifies translational research at its very best,” said ASH President Linda J. Burns, MD, of the University of Minnesota. “Their research has allowed for the translation of basic laboratory insights to the patient bedside and has resulted in better care for of millions of patients with sickle cell disease around the world.”

*To arrange an interview with Drs. DeBaun or Hebbel, please contact Andrea Slesinski, ASH Communications Manager, at 202-552-4927 or aslesinski@hematology.org.*

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The American Society of Hematology (ASH) ([www.hematology.org](http://www.hematology.org)) is the world’s largest professional society of hematologists dedicated to furthering the understanding, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of disorders affecting the blood. For more than 50 years, the Society has led the development of hematology as a discipline by promoting research, patient care, education, training, and advocacy. The official journal of ASH is *Blood* ([www.bloodjournal.org](http://www.bloodjournal.org)), the most cited peer-reviewed publication in the field, which is available weekly in print and online.