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For Immediate Release

Lance Pohl Receives Distinguished Lifetime Toxicology Scholar Award

January 14, 2009 (Reston, VA)—Dr. Lance Pohl, Chief of the Section on Molecular and Cellular Toxicology in the Laboratory of Molecular Immunology at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, has been awarded the Distinguished Lifetime Toxicology Scholar Award by the Society of Toxicology for his substantial and seminal scientific contributions and accomplishments in the field of toxicology. For more than 30 years, he has been a leader in the field of drug toxicity specializing in how drugs cause liver injury as a side effect. Although drug-induced liver injury (DILI) is a rare side-effect, when all drugs in use are considered, it remains a major cause of acute liver failure and a principal reason new drugs never reach the market or are withdrawn post-marketing. Two reasons for this dilemma are that it has been difficult to predict which new drugs will cause liver injury and which patients will be susceptible to DILI.

Dr. Pohl and his colleagues have made major discoveries over the last three decades, which have led to a better understanding of how drugs can cause liver injury and to the identification of factors that may predispose individuals to DILI. For example, his laboratory has found that DILI in many cases is not caused by the parent drug, but instead by a product of the drug formed in the liver that can alter the chemical structure and biological function of important proteins in the liver. In some cases, these altered proteins appear to cause the immune system to attack and further injure the liver. Other studies conducted by his laboratory have shown that many molecules in the liver protect this organ from DILI, which Dr. Pohl and his colleagues believe is a major factor contributing to the rare incidence of DILI. In this regard, recent studies from his laboratory have suggested that genetic deficiencies in one or more of these protective factors may have a role in increasing the susceptibility of an individual to DILI. These and other findings have given pharmaceutical companies the building blocks to design safer new drugs and develop genetic methods for future implementation of personalized medicine to prevent DILI in susceptible individuals. His passion for discovery is reflected in those who have trained in his laboratory, many of whom have gone on to distinguished scientific careers of their own. “Dr. Pohl’s professional record is the epitome of a career of distinguished scholarship in toxicology, and he is a highly deserving recipient of this recognition,” according to the SOT Awards Committee citation.

Dr. Pohl received his bachelor’s degree in Bacteriology from the University of California, Berkeley, his doctorate of Pharmacy from the University of California Medical Center in 1970 and his doctorate in Medicinal Chemistry from the University of California Medical Center San Francisco in 1975. He was a National Institutes of Health Post Doctorate Fellow at the Laboratory of Chemical Pharmacology, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute for five years from 1976–1981. In 1981, he was a Chemical Pharmacologist, Laboratory of Chemical Pharmacology, National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. In 1982, he became Chief, Section on Pharmacological Chemistry, Laboratory of Chemical Pharmacology, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. In 1994, he became Chief, Section on Molecular and Cellular Toxicology, Laboratory of Molecular Immunology, National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. He also

Add One – Pohl Award

served as a Clinical Instructor, Department of Anesthesia, School of Medicine, Georgetown University from 1981–1985. In 1985, he became Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of Anesthesia, School of Medicine, Georgetown University. From 1990 to the present, he serves as Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Anesthesia, School of Medicine, Georgetown University.

He is the recipient of numerous awards including the 1968–1969 Mead-Johnson Undergraduate Research Award; the NIH Director’s Award for Studies of the Mechanism of Inhalation Anesthetic-Hepatotoxicity & the Development of Methods of Detecting Sensitized Patients in 1992; the National Heart, Lung and Blood Sustained Superior Performance Award in 1997; the Roland T. Lakey Award from the Alpha Chi Chapter of Rho Chi, College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions, Wayne State University in 1999; and, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Fellows Award for Research Mentoring in 2003.

He is a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Chemical Society, the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics, the International Society for the Study of Xenobiotics and the Society of Toxicology and has been on the editorial boards of several scientific journals.

The Society of Toxicology (SOT) is a scientific not-for-profit organization for professionals from around the world who are involved in toxicology. With more than 6,000 members, the Society is working to build the future of toxicology and is dedicated to increasing the scientific impact of toxicology, advocating the value of toxicology, and increasing visibility of the organization and members as scientific leaders.

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