

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Global health advocate Dr. Maria Elena Bottazzi wins Vilcek-Gold Award

The Vilcek-Gold Award for Humanism in Healthcare is a \$10,000 prize awarded jointly by the Vilcek Foundation and The Arnold P. Gold Foundation to immigrant healthcare professionals

New York, NY, June 6, 2023 — The Vilcek Foundation and The Arnold P. Gold Foundation have announced they will bestow the [2023 Vilcek-Gold Award for Humanism in Healthcare](#) on Dr. Maria Elena Bottazzi at the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) meeting in Seattle on November 4, 2023.

[The Vilcek-Gold Award](#) is a shared initiative of the Vilcek Foundation and the Gold Foundation that embodies the missions of both organizations. The award recognizes an outstanding immigrant healthcare professional in the United States and honors the positive impact that accessible and humanistic care has on public health. Honorees receive an unrestricted cash prize of \$10,000 and a commemorative trophy and are invited to present a lecture as part of the AAMC's *Voices of Medicine and Society* series at the AAMC meeting.

Bottazzi receives the Vilcek-Gold Award for her leadership in the development of a patent-free open-source vaccine for COVID-19, and for her career-long work to support healthcare education and access in vulnerable populations globally. Bottazzi is the senior associate dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, co-director of the Texas Children's Hospital Center for Vaccine Development, and a professor in the department of pediatrics and molecular virology and microbiology at the Baylor College of Medicine. Born in Italy and raised in Honduras, she was inspired by her family's entrepreneurial and diplomatic spirit, which she credits as having a profound impact on her character and career.

"When an outstanding scientist or physician also has an empathetic understanding of the human condition, they have the potential to change medicine and impact the world for the better," said Jan Vilcek, chairman and CEO of the Vilcek Foundation. "Dr. Bottazzi's integration of biomedical science and public health policy and management exemplifies this. Her leadership in global health and vaccine accessibility has had a profound impact on the lives of millions of people."

Said Dr. Richard I. Levin, president and CEO of the Gold Foundation, "Dr. Bottazzi is a wonderful example of the impact that is possible when compassion and science are joined. We congratulate Dr. Bottazzi on her 2023 Vilcek-Gold Award, and we thank her for her great leadership in humanism in healthcare."

Bottazzi studied microbiology and clinical chemistry at the National Autonomous University of Honduras before immigrating to the United States to earn her PhD in molecular immunology and experimental

pathology at the University of Florida. She completed postdoctoral work at the University of Miami and the University of Pennsylvania before joining the faculty of the George Washington University Medical Center in Washington, DC and later as faculty at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas. At George Washington and Baylor College of Medicine, Bottazzi honed and expanded her specialization in tropical and emerging diseases, working on the development of vaccine programs and treatment protocols and initiatives with a focus on impoverished communities around the globe.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, Bottazzi worked with her team at Texas Children's Hospital's Center for Vaccine Development to develop and advance a patent-free and open-source conventional vaccine technology for SARS-CoV-2. Ensuring a patent-free, open-source vaccine would allow global manufacturers to adopt the technology to produce and distribute doses, while providing a source of income and empowerment for regional businesses and governments. The Center's vaccine was adopted in India and Indonesia. In India and in Indonesia. These vaccines—distributed as CORBEVAX and INDOVAC, respectively—achieved emergency authorization in record time, and to date more than 100 million doses have been delivered.

Bottazzi was nominated for the Vilcek-Gold Award for Humanism in Healthcare by her colleague, Dr. Huda Zoghbi, Director of The Duncan Neurological Research Institute at Texas Children's Hospital, a Distinguished Service Professor at Baylor College of Medicine, and an Investigator with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, with whom she has worked on global public health initiatives and pediatric health initiatives at the Baylor College of Medicine and at Texas Children's Hospital. An immigrant from Lebanon, Zoghbi received a Vilcek Prize in Biomedical Science in 2009. "Dr. Bottazzi's professional and personal philosophy is the epitome of humanism," said Zoghbi. "She is a true pioneer—leading a new paradigm in biotechnology and vaccine development through open science and patent-free technology transfer models. Her leadership builds scientific capacity in resource-poor communities in the U.S. and in low-and middle-income countries to reduce health inequalities and disparities."

"Being an immigrant is my superpower," Bottazzi says. "I apply my cultural intelligence to relate better, to be more cognizant, to work more effectively, and to cross multiple boundaries—it's the secret sauce of becoming a successful biomedical scientist and global health advocate."

Read more about Bottazzi and the Vilcek-Gold Award for Humanism in Healthcare at the Vilcek Foundation: [*Global Health Advocate Dr. Maria Elena Bottazzi Wins Vilcek-Gold Award*](#)

The Vilcek Foundation

The Vilcek Foundation raises awareness of immigrant contributions in the United States and fosters appreciation for the arts and sciences. The foundation was established in 2000 by Jan and Marica Vilcek, immigrants from the former Czechoslovakia. The mission of the foundation was inspired by the couple's respective careers in biomedical science and art history. Since 2000, the foundation has awarded over \$7 million in prizes to foreign-born individuals and has supported organizations with over \$6 million in grants.

The Vilcek Foundation is a private operating foundation, a federally tax-exempt nonprofit organization under IRS Section 501(c)(3). To learn more, please visit vilcek.org.

The Arnold P. Gold Foundation

The Arnold P. Gold Foundation was founded in 1988 with the vision that healthcare will be dramatically improved by placing the interests, values, and dignity of all people at the core of teaching and practice. The Gold Foundation champions humanism in healthcare, which the foundation defines as compassionate, collaborative, and scientifically excellent care; the foundation embraces all, and targets any barriers that prevent individuals or groups from accessing this standard of care. The Gold Foundation empowers experts, learners, and leaders to create systems and cultures that support humanistic care for all.

The Arnold P. Gold Foundation is a public not-for-profit organization, a federally tax-exempt organization under IRS Section 501(c)(3).