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## **U.VA. FACULTY MEMBER WINS MACARTHUR AWARD**

Janine Jagger, a University of Virginia epidemiologist, has known for almost a week that she was to be the recipient of one of the nation's most prestigious awards - the MacArthur Fellowship.

When she answered the phone in her office at 6 p.m. last Wednesday she was expecting to hear, "You're late. What's for dinner?" Instead, Jagger was asked if she knew what a MacArthur Fellow was. When she answered in the affirmative, Daniel J. Socolow, director of the MacArthur Fellows Program, announced that she was one.

"I really had a difficult time finding something gracious and smooth to say," Jagger said Tuesday, adding that she was so flustered she forgot to say thank you and had to call Socolow back.

Harder still was keeping the news from her colleagues at work. "It's been quite a week."

Jagger, long recognized for her groundbreaking research on how to protect health care workers from the transmission of blood-borne diseases, joins an elite group of American creative thinkers as one of this year's 24 winners.

Known as "genius awards," the fellowships carry a \$500,000 no-strings-attached prize.

A key element of the program is confidence that recipients are in the best position to decide how to make the most effective use of their award. Jagger says she will have no problem identifying any number of projects that she's wanted to begin. "The difficulty will not be in spending the money," she said, "it will be in living up to the incredible standards of this award."

Jagger, director of the International Health Care Worker Safety Center at the School of Medicine, has spent much of her career focusing on the safety of health-care workers. Each year in the United States, she said, more than half a million workers are stuck by contaminated needles and other sharp medical devices, resulting in psychological and physical trauma.

Jagger proved that injury risk was related to specific device design features, thereby reorienting the debate about protecting workers from changing their behavior to improving the design of the devices they use.

In 1985, she and her colleagues designed some of the first needle-stick protective devices recorded by the U.S. Patent Office. In the early 1990s, she developed the Exposure Prevention Information Network (EPINet), which is now used in some 1,500 hospitals. Her research and analyses continue to guide design engineers in their efforts to improve the safety of medical devices.

Jagger, one of a half-dozen medical researchers among the 24 recipients, is in good company.



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Socolow calls the winners "extraordinary people doing extraordinary things. The new fellows are men and women of many ages, working in many different areas, each of whom is highly focused and tenacious and distinctively fresh and original in approach." Other recipients included practitioners in the fields of art, music, dance, economics and journalism.

Jagger, who came to the School of Medicine in 1978 and received her Ph.D. from U.Va. in '87, is the second U.Va. faculty member to win the award in as many years, joining chemistry professor Brooks H. Pate.

"In all our programs, we are committed to nurturing those who are a source of new knowledge and ideas, have the courage to challenge inherited orthodoxies and to take intellectual, scientific, and cultural risks," said Jonathan F. Fanton, president of the MacArthur Foundation.

"For over two decades, the MacArthur Fellows Program has been a vital part of the Foundation's efforts to recognize and support individuals who lift our spirits, illuminate human potential, and shape our collective future."

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