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## **Amida Care Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jerome Ernst Recognized with NYS AIDS Institute's Linda Laubenstein Award**

*Award will be presented to Dr. Ernst by renowned HIV specialist Dr. Charles Gonzales during  
New York State's World AIDS Day celebration*

**(New York, NY—December 1, 2020)** – On December 1, Dr. Jerome Ernst, Chief Medical Officer of **Amida Care**, New York State's largest not-for-profit Medicaid Special Needs Health Plan (SNP) designed for New Yorkers affected by HIV, will receive the New York State (NYS) AIDS Institute's Linda Laubenstein Award at a special virtual ceremony during New York State's official World AIDS Day celebrations.

"I am thrilled to learn that Dr. Ernst will receive the 2020 Linda Laubenstein Award. On behalf of the entire Amida Care team, I would like to extend him our warmest congratulations and appreciation for all his outstanding work on behalf of Amida Care members and communities in need," said **Doug Wirth**, President and CEO of Amida Care, "For decades, Dr. Ernst has worked tirelessly in the fight to end the HIV epidemic, while demonstrating a passionate commitment to help people living in poverty, people experiencing behavioral health issues, and other vulnerable populations. Dr. Ernst's vision was instrumental in establishing Amida Care's unique model of care that helps each member access quality health care, which contributes to ending the HIV epidemic. I cannot think of a more deserving candidate for this award."

Established in 1992, the Dr. Linda Laubenstein Annual HIV Clinical Excellence Award honors physicians who, beyond providing the highest quality of clinical care for people with HIV/AIDS, are also distinguished by their compassionate manner and their wholehearted involvement in the ongoing effort to achieve comprehensive care for persons with HIV/AIDS. The award was established in memory of Dr. Laubenstein, a Manhattan physician, to honor her pioneering work and outstanding contribution to the quality of AIDS care in the early years of the epidemic.

A visionary, pioneer, and humanist, Dr. Ernst launched the AIDS program at Bronx-Lebanon Hospital Center in 1980, creating an AIDS Unit, the AIDS clinic, and the AIDS research program. Dr. Ernst also contributed to the development of specialized primary care clinics within community health centers to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In the 1990s, his work facilitating support groups for people living with HIV/AIDS—many of them challenged by substance use disorders, a history of trauma, poverty, homelessness, and other psycho-social issues—deepened his understanding of the factors that place individuals and communities at risk for HIV, as well as the barriers that prevent them from accessing care.

Dr. Ernst was instrumental in the establishment of Amida Care (then Vida Care) in 2003, working in partnership with several sponsoring community-based health centers that recognized the need for specialized HIV/AIDS care and services for their clients. Dr. Ernst is the chief architect of Amida Care's highly regarded model of care—an innovative, high-touch coordinated care model that addresses the individual needs of members with multiple chronic conditions, complex medical needs, and other health and social challenges. Dr. Ernst has championed programs that address social determinants of health and the needs of the whole person—physical, mental, emotional, and social. He designed Amida Care's Integrated Care Teams, which create and oversee personalized care plans for Amida Care members.

Dr. Ernst was also instrumental in advancing the New York State Department of Health's approval for Amida Care and other New York SNPs to expand plan eligibility beyond people living with HIV to serve HIV-negative people of transgender experience and those experiencing homelessness—populations that are placed at high risk for HIV infection—to help prevent new infections, which supports the goals of the New York State Blueprint to End the Epidemic. His approach to providing gender-affirming, culturally competent support services for transgender people has had an immediate impact on the extreme challenges and disparities faced by this community in such areas as housing, employment, violence, and discrimination in some medical settings.

Dr. Ernst has served as the Medical Director of ACRIA (the AIDS Community Research Initiative of America), the Associate Director of Medicine, Chief of the Division of Pulmonary Diseases, and Chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases at Bronx-Lebanon Hospital Center. He was also an Associate Professor of Medicine at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and is a Fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine and the American College of Chest Physicians.

#### **About Amida Care**

Amida Care Inc. is a not-for-profit health plan that specializes in providing comprehensive health coverage and coordinated care to New Yorkers with complex conditions, including HIV and behavioral health disorders, and people who are of transgender experience or who are homeless (regardless of HIV status). Amida Care has a wide network of health care providers throughout New York City and is the largest Medicaid Special Needs Health Plan (SNP) in New York State. For more information, visit [www.amidacareny.org](http://www.amidacareny.org).