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# ADDING MULTIMEDIA Innovative Teen Scientists Win Over \$1 Million in Awards in Intel Science Talent Search 2016

**Top Winners' Projects Enhance Medications for Cancer and Heart Disease, Combat Water Pollution, Diagnose Lung Disease via Smartphone**

WASHINGTON--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- America's future scientists, engineers and inventors were celebrated tonight in the nation's capital, receiving more than \$1 million in awards from Intel Corporation. These promising high school students are the winners of the Intel Science Talent Search, a program of Society for Science & the Public (the Society), and the nation's most prestigious pre-college science and math competition, which celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

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Intel Science Talent Search first place winners Amol Punjabi (Mass.), Paige Brown (Maine) and Maya Varma (Calif.) each took home \$150,000 at competition's 75th anniversary event. Photo credit: Linda Doane

**Three first-place awards of \$150,000 were presented:**

**Amol Punjabi**, 17, of Marlborough, Massachusetts, won the **First Place Medal of Distinction for Basic Research**, which recognizes finalists who demonstrate exceptional scientific potential through depth of research and analysis. Punjabi developed software that could help drug makers develop new therapies for cancer and heart disease. He is the lead author of a paper on nanoparticles published in ACS Nano and co-author of a paper on a related topic in Nanoscale. Punjabi is also the lead pianist for his high school's jazz workshop and captain of the Science Olympiad team.

**Paige Brown**, 17, of Bangor, Maine, won the **First Place Medal of Distinction for Global Good**, which rewards finalists who demonstrate great scientific potential through their passion to make a difference. Brown studied the water quality of six environmentally impaired local streams with high E. coli levels and five with high phosphate contamination levels. She is currently developing a cost-effective filter largely made of calcium alginate strands to remove the phosphate from stormwater systems. Brown is co-captain of the math team and secretary of the Key Club at her high school, and she also helps organize fundraisers for her school and community.

**Maya Varma**, 17, of Cupertino, California, won the **First Place Medal of Distinction for Innovation**, which celebrates finalists who demonstrate the problem-solving aptitude of an engineer through innovative design and creativity. Varma used \$35 worth of hobbyist electronics and free computer-aided design tools to create a low-cost, smartphone-based

lung function analyzer that diagnoses lung disease as accurately as expensive devices currently used in medical laboratories. She is proficient in five programming languages, holds leadership roles in multiple honor societies and science and math clubs, and has won grand prizes in several prestigious science competitions.

“The Society congratulates Amol, Paige and Maya,” said Maya Ajmera, president and CEO of Society for Science & the Public and alumna of the Science Talent Search. “They and the rest of the top winners of Intel STS 2016 are using science and technology to help address the problems they see in the world and will be at the forefront of creating the solutions we need for the future. We applaud their curiosity and dedication, and look forward to celebrating stellar young scientists for 75 more years.”

“In addition to honoring two female top winners, this year’s competition is the first in the Science Talent Search’s 75-year history in which more than half of the finalists are female,” said Rosalind Hudnell, vice president in Human Resources, director of Corporate Affairs at Intel Corporation, and president of the Intel Foundation. “This milestone is an inspiring sign of progress toward closing the gender gap in technology and engineering. We hope these finalists’ outstanding work will inspire young people from all backgrounds to develop their interests in these fields.”

Building on the top award prizes, three second-place winners received awards of \$75,000, and three third-place winners received awards of \$35,000.

### **Second Place:**

**Meena Jagadeesan**, 17, of Naperville, Illinois, won the **Second Place Medal of Distinction for Basic Research**. She investigated an object in algebraic combinatorics, or the mathematics of counting, to reveal a novel relationship between classes of graphs.

**Michael Zhang**, 18, of Berwyn, Pennsylvania, won the **Second Place Medal of Distinction for Global Good**. He engineered tiny virus-like particles to deliver gene-modifying proteins to target cells for medical therapy by altering the genome of those cells in a controlled way.

**Milind Jagota**, 18, of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, won the **Second Place Medal of Distinction for Innovation**. He studied the performance of random nanowire networks as a less costly alternative to the transparent conductors now used in touchscreen devices.

### **Third Place:**

**Kunal Shroff**, 17, of Great Falls, Virginia, won the **Third Place Medal of Distinction for Basic Research**. He discovered new relationships between the key protein associated with Huntington’s disease and the biological processes of cellular death that cause Huntington’s symptoms. His work may lead to new treatments.

**Nathan Charles Marshall (Nate)**, 17, of Boise, Idaho, won the **Third Place Medal of Distinction for Global Good**. He studied a marine sediment core sample and related it to present-day climate change, concluding that Earth can recover from current climate change trends if action is taken soon.

**Kavya Ravichandran**, 17, of Westlake, Ohio, won the **Third Place Medal of Distinction for Innovation**. She studied the use of nanomedicine to destroy potentially fatal blood clots

that can cause heart attacks and strokes.

This year's finalists hail from 38 schools in 18 states. Of the 1,750 high school seniors who entered the Intel Science Talent Search 2016, 300 were announced as semifinalists in January. Of those, 40 were chosen as finalists and invited to Washington, D.C., to compete for the top nine awards. These finalists join the ranks of other notable Science Talent Search alumni, who over the past 75 years, have gone on to win 12 Nobel Prizes, two Fields Medals, 11 National Medals of Science, 17 MacArthur Foundation Fellowships and even an Academy Award for Best Actress.

### **About Intel**

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### **About the Society**

Society for Science & the Public, the nonprofit organization dedicated to public engagement in scientific research and education, has owned and administered the Science Talent Search since its inception in 1942. To learn more about the Society, visit [www.societyforscience.org](http://www.societyforscience.org), and follow the organization on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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