



UNC-Chapel Hill maternal health innovator honored with 2025 O. Max Gardner Award

Dr. Jeffrey Stringer recognized for advancements in global women's health

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RALEIGH, N.C. – Dr. Jeffrey Stringer, the Clarke-Pearson Distinguished Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has received the 2025 Oliver Max Gardner Award for his transformative work in maternal healthcare in low-resource settings around the world.

Established by the will of former North Carolina Gov. O. Max Gardner, the award is the UNC System's highest faculty honor. It is presented annually to the individual "who has made the greatest contribution to the welfare of the human race." Dr. Stringer was recognized during today's UNC Board of Governors meeting.

Since joining UNC-Chapel Hill in 2012, Dr. Stringer has launched and directed the School of Medicine's Division of Global Women's Health. Under his leadership, the division has secured more than \$120 million in external funding for maternal health research. Stringer also serves as associate director for research at UNC's Institute for Global Health and Infectious Diseases.



His most recent innovation – a portable, battery-powered prenatal ultrasound device enhanced with artificial intelligence – addresses one of global health's greatest challenges: access to diagnostic imaging during pregnancy. Designed for use by minimally trained providers, the device delivers vital fetal health information in remote and underserved areas. Supported by nearly \$23 million from the Gates Foundation and the Helmsley Charitable Trust, the instrument is already in use in maternity care deserts across Africa and Asia, with plans underway to bring the technology to rural North Carolina.

"Dr. Stringer exemplifies the highest ideals of public service, combining research, innovation and global impact," said UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Lee H. Roberts. "He has tackled one of the most enduring and tragic health disparities – maternal mortality – with the conviction that thoughtful innovation can save lives."

Dr. Stringer has authored nearly 300 peer-reviewed publications, including research that has shaped worldwide guidelines on maternal HIV care. His clinical trials and public health leadership have improved the lives of millions, particularly through his earlier work as co-founder and director of the Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia, which expanded maternal and child care to more than 1.6 million people across 350 sites.

“Dr. Stringer’s work demonstrates the power of university research to solve urgent, real-world problems,” said UNC System President Peter Hans. “He is delivering life-saving innovation to the people who need it most, advancing the UNC System’s mission to serve both local and global needs.”

He is also a dedicated educator and mentor. He co-founded the nation’s first global women’s health fellowship for obstetrician-gynecologists, training more than 180 early-career professionals from the United States and Zambia to lead in maternal health.

“Dr. Stringer is improving maternal health not just abroad, but here in North Carolina,” said UNC Board of Governors Chair Wendy Murphy. “His commitment to reaching rural and underserved communities is exactly the kind of service this award was meant to honor.”



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