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## Her Persistence Changed the Course of This Pandemic

An interview with **Katalin Karikó**

2022 Canada Gairdner International Award laureate

I am Katalin Karikó. I was born in Hungary and I am a biochemist by training. I got my education in Hungary and then moved to the United States in 1985. And I worked here at the University of Pennsylvania for 24 years, and then moved to Germany, so I am moving back and forth.

Most of my life, I worked with RNA. That's my favourite molecule. In Hungary, I started to synthesize short RNA, which had antiviral effect. And then from the 1990s I started to work with messenger RNA, and used the messenger RNA as therapeutic. So messenger RNA coding for therapeutic protein was my major work. And not until I met Drew Weissman here in 1997 and we started to work together, I realized that the RNA I am synthesizing is quite inflammatory.

Together we found that if we change one component during the synthesis of the RNA, we can make the RNA non-inflammatory. So we were ready for prime time to test this for therapeutic purposes.

The Gairdner Award of course is a very prestigious award and I am very honoured. All of the scientists who get this award in prior years is making me really humbled that me too belong to this group, and so I am very thrilled and I am very thankful.

