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Nick Mulcahy is a senior journalist for Medscape Hematology-Oncology. Before joining Medscape, Nick was a freelance medical news writer for 15 years, working for companies such as the International Medical News Group, MedPage Today, HealthDay, McMahon Publishing, and Advanstar. He is also the former managing editor of breastcancer.org. He can be contacted at nmulcahy@medscape.net.

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Campaign addresses the anonymity of science

Nick Mulcahy



Left to right: Rapper B.o.B, Dr. Stephen Baylin, Dr. Mehmet Toner. Photo by Kurt Iswarjenko

December 1, 2010 — Stephen Baylin, MD, is not a rock star. But he seems to be something along those lines — at least to a clerk at his neighborhood 7-Eleven convenience store.

Dr. Baylin, who is a cancer biologist and researcher in epigenetic therapy at the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Maryland, is one of the [2010 Rock Stars of Science](#), a public-service campaign that is now in its second year and is featured in a 6-page photo spread in the December issue of *GQ* magazine.

He is one of 6 oncologists/cancer researchers in the promotional campaign, which includes celebrity rock stars such as Bret Michaels, Debbie Harry, and Timbaland.

The Rock Stars of Science campaign aims, in an unconventional way, to communicate the importance of biomedical research and scientists in the United States.

The December issue of *GQ* is now on newsstands, which Dr. Baylin found out inadvertently.

"I was at the 7-Eleven and noticed a picture of Jeff Bridges on the cover of a magazine. I've really enjoyed him in movies, so I looked at the magazine — which turned out be *GQ*," he told *Medscape Medical News*.

Dr. Baylin proceeded to the cash register, looking at the magazine. The young male clerk looked too and recognized Dr. Baylin in the photos.

As Dr. Baylin left the store, where he regularly buys a morning cup of coffee, the clerk shouted hopefully after him, "I've always wanted to meet Sandra Bullock!"

The sponsor of the Rock Star campaign, the menswear designer Geoffrey Beene and his charity organization Geoffrey Beene Gives Back, hopes Dr. Baylin's shopping experience will be repeated many times over — but with scientists and their work being accurately recognized as vitally connected to American life.

"Scientists must venture outside their comfort zones to show the public how cool — and how important — their work really is," said Francis Collins, MD, director of the National Institutes of Health in a press statement from the campaign. Dr. Collins was one of the [2009 Rock Stars of Science](#).

"I urge every scientist to get into the act by telling friends, neighbors, community leaders, and elected officials about his or her research and what it means for our nation's health. Imagine how powerful that would be," he said.

Anonymous Profession?

Scientists might be the most anonymous professionals in the United States, suggests the Rock Star of Science campaign.

Nearly half of Americans polled in Harris Interactive and Research!America surveys could not name a single living scientist, according to the campaign.

In effort to "bridge" what the Rock Star campaign calls "a serious recognition gap for science," 17 of the nation's top medical researchers, including 2 Nobel laureates, dressed up in outfits reminiscent of 1940s hardboiled detectives and posed for pictures with prominent musicians.

In addition to Dr. Baylin, who is deputy director of the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center and a Stand Up to Cancer Dream Team leader, the other oncologists/cancer researchers on the 2010 roster are:

- Catriona Jamieson, MD, PhD, assistant professor of medicine and hematologic malignancies, University of California, San Diego (UCSD), and director of Stem Cell Research, Moores UCSD Cancer Center
- Joan Massagué, PhD, chair of the cancer biology and genetics program, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York City, and executive committee member, Geoffrey Beene Cancer Research Center
- Phillip A. Sharp, PhD, Nobel laureate; professor at the Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge; and chair, Stand Up To Cancer Scientific Advisory Committee
- Charles L. Sawyers, MD, chair of the human oncology and pathogenesis program at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, and executive committee member, Geoffrey Beene Cancer Research Center
- Craig B. Thompson, MD, president/CEO of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, and chair of the executive committee of the Geoffrey Beene Cancer Research Center

Each of the Rock Stars of Science is profiled on the campaign's Web site. The profile touches on both the gravity of their work and personal tidbits that could be considered of lesser import.

For instance, Dr. Sawyers, who has been part of teams that discovered the groundbreaking chronic myeloid leukemia drug *Gleevec* (Novartis) and the potentially groundbreaking advanced prostate cancer drug MDV 3100 (Medivation), reveals that his "worst part-time job ever" was delivering yellow pages door to door.

Dr. Baylin said his participation in the Rock Stars of Science campaign has raised his profile in other areas of his life, not just in convenience stores.

Dr. Baylin's photo shoot for the Rock Stars of Science pictorial took place in Los Angeles when he participated in the filming of the annual Stand Up To Cancer [television program](#), a creation of the Entertainment Industry Foundation, which also sponsors the Rock Stars, and the American Association for Cancer Research.

In the photos, he was teamed with Mehmet Toner, PhD, from Harvard University in Boston, Massachusetts, and the rapper B.o.B., who has a number of hit songs and is only 19 years of age.

During the photo shoot, a friend in the audience took some digital pictures with a camera phone and emailed them to Dr. Baylin, who in turn emailed them to his grandchildren.

"My 2 eldest grandchildren swooned. B.o.B. is a favorite of theirs. I am now validated as a cool grandfather!"