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NEWS

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
(SOUTHWESTERN)
MEDICAL SCHOOL AT DALLAS



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DALLAS--The Department of Pediatrics at The University of Texas (Southwestern) Medical School may be a colonial power, but it's non-aggressive. The department and its chairman are involved in four foreign countries. All because concern for children is multilateral.

Just back from Saigon is Department Chairman Heinz Eichenwald who was requested by the State Department to plan and assist in setting up a functioning department of pediatrics in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Saigon.

The need for improvement of medical education in that strife-wracked country is imperative, Dr. Eichenwald says. This was his second trip in the effort to develop the pediatrics department as well as assist in the solution of severe public health problems there.

"Infant mortality is from 300 to 350 per 1,000 in the first year. That's a third," explains the child specialist. In this country it's around 23 per 1,000.

"In Vietnam, when you come into a hospital, your chances of dying are pretty good. On a given children's disease, the doctors might have available only a French book on how children in Paris were treated. It's not the same. There are nutritional and environmental differences," he said.

During his first visit from November to January, 1968-69, Dr. Eichenwald tried out various educational methods he thought would be more relevant to the patients in Children's Hospital in Saigon.

On his second trip this year he learned the results: "From what I was told there was a steep decline in mortality." Specifically measured were deaths from meningitis, pneumonia and diarrhea.

The program is under the sponsorship of the American Medical Association and the Department of State. The Dallas department was given full responsibility for development and management of the effort.

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first add new lead pediatrics

About a dozen postgraduate students will be trained in the preliminary phase of the program. Chairman of the Saigon pediatrics department, Dr. Phan Din Tuan, spent two months with the department in Dallas and a visit of six months by another professor is expected this fall.

"We can make more friends for the U.S. with these efforts than with many others," Dr. Eichenwald believes. "We're paid no fees--just expenses--and they appreciate it. I think this is why these programs tend to be so effective in making friends. Right now, despite the student riots and the military being assaulted in the streets, I'd have no worries in moving about Saigon."

The assignment in Vietnam is most likely the outgrowth of other international collaborative ventures undertaken by the Dallas teaching department--especially in South America.

There continues to be collaboration between the UTSMS group and the Department of Pediatrics at the Children's Hospital of the University of Chile at Santiago.

Prof. Jorge Howard and Prof. Igor Mimica of Santiago spent a number of weeks at UTSMS, while Dr. John Nelson and Dr. Kenneth Haltalin have, in turn, visited the Chilean department. Prof. Howard's son, Jorge, is in Dallas now to take residency training.

"We've set up some collaborative research in infectious diseases and nutrition," said Dr. Eichenwald. "Some of the studies would be difficult to carry out here: we don't have the numbers of patients with nutritional disturbances and some of the diseases we're interested in are more common there," he added. Those diseases include sepsis and meningitis, he said, as well as pneumonias in young children and various diarrheal diseases.

Another cooperative arrangement exists between the UTSMS department and the pediatrics department of the University of Antioquena in Medellin, Colombia.

"One of their assistant professors spent two and a half months here and a resident, Rafael Monotas, also visited," said Dr. Eichenwald, who, with Drs. Haltalin, Nelson and Eugene Kippel have visited the Colombian school.

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second add new lead pediatrics

There are two efforts underway with the University of Antioquena group, Dr. Eichenwald said. One is an effort to train some of their people in infectious disease and in clinical research. Projects include a study of bacterial meningitis in children--particularly the effect of nutrition on response to that disease.

"We hope to expand into other areas as money becomes available," explained the UTSMS department chairman. He said that some money comes from pharmaceutical houses and philanthropic foundations.

Still another member of the UTSMS Pediatrics Department has a cooperative international research venture underway. Dr. George McCracken regularly journeys to the most modern hospital in Haiti--the Albert Schweitzer Hospital.

Dr. McCracken and members of the hospital staff cooperate in studies of tetanus treatment in newborns.

The Dallas department has requests for cooperative programs from a number of South American pediatrics departments which it is presently unable to accept, but Dr. Eichenwald intends to maintain an open door policy as much as possible.

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