

# News

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\*\*\*\*UT Southwestern establishes rehabilitation research center with Mobility Foundation grant

DALLAS -- A \$6.4 million donation from the Mobility Foundation to Southwestern Medical Foundation will be used to establish a Mobility Foundation Center for Rehabilitation Research at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, foundation and medical center leaders announced today.

The center will be a cooperative project involving UT Southwestern's Departments of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Neurosurgery, Neurology and Orthopaedic Surgery, as well as other clinical and basic science departments. It will focus on applied research aimed at developing improved therapies for mobility-impaired patients of all kinds.

"This is an unprecedented opportunity to create a center with such great potential," said Dr. Kern Wildenthal, president of UT Southwestern.

"Very little is being done anywhere in rehabilitation science research," said Dr. Charles C. Sprague, chairman and chief executive officer of Southwestern Medical Foundation. "It will take time, but this center could well become the leader in the field."

The grant to establish the Mobility Foundation Center for Rehabilitation Research at UT Southwestern will be held in trust by Southwestern Medical Foundation, with \$2 million set aside as a dollar-for-dollar challenge fund to establish four endowed Distinguished Chairs for the center. One chair will be held by the director of the center; another will be in physical medicine and rehabilitation; a third will be in clinical neuroscience; and a fourth, in orthopaedic surgery.

(More)

Dr. Phala Helm, chairman of the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Department at UT Southwestern, called the grant "a fabulous opportunity for the school and for the department." Her department is especially interested in mobility problems in the aging population, in preventing amputation of diabetics' feet, in the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis and in preventing contracture--the tightening and shrinking of joint tissue--and scarring in burn rehabilitation, Helm said.

"We're very excited about the possibilities for further clinical interaction across disciplinary lines," said Dr. Ralph Greenlee, associate professor of neurology and director of UT Southwestern's Clinical Center for Neurologic Diseases.

The new center also will allow "clinical amplification of some basic research," the neurologist said. "We're hoping to do some work on the pharmacology of neurotransmitters and promoting regrowth of neurons, trying to find ways of limiting the initial damage and promoting regrowth of neural tissue."

Dr. Robert Bucholz, chairman of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, said rehabilitation problems include "a broad spectrum of tremendously significant problems in today's society," including head and spine injuries, musculoskeletal diseases and injuries, arthritis, strokes and other vascular conditions.

The new center for rehabilitation research marks a significant commitment on the part of UT Southwestern to applied research and to a cooperative approach crossing disciplinary lines, Bucholz added.

"We already have a state-of-the-art lab for assessing mobility problems," he said. "This is the next logical step--to develop and test therapies for those problems."

The lab to which Bucholz refers is UT Southwestern's Mobility Research and Assessment Laboratory, which opened last June in space provided by the Dallas Rehabilitation Institute. That lab also was established with a gift from the Mobility Foundation.

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Note: The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas comprises Southwestern Medical School, Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Southwestern Allied Health Sciences School.