SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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HABERECHTS FUND 'WILD-HARE' RESEARCH IDEAS

DALLAS – February 18, 2000 – Scientists often kick around off-the-wall research ideas, but most never have a chance to be tested because funding for highly speculative research is so scarce.

Then, four years ago Rolf and Ute Haberecht, longtime supporters of UT Southwestern, recognized the need to encourage just this kind of thinking and initiated the "Wild-Hare Idea Program" to provide seed money for innovative ideas that would otherwise probably go unfunded and undeveloped. The Haberechts initial gift underwrote five projects, and now they have contributed additional funds to Southwestern Medical Foundation for four more grants.

"Ideas that are not 'mainstream' often fail to find funds at the national level until preliminary experiments can be performed to prove their feasibility," said Dr. Kern Wildenthal, president of UT Southwestern. "The Haberechts are generously providing the opportunity for UT Southwestern researchers to explore their most original and controversial ideas which otherwise might never be tested."

"UT Southwestern has numerous investigators with ingenious and imaginative ideas," said Dr. William Neaves, UT Southwestern executive vice president for academic affairs. "Twenty-four intriguing applications for Wild Hare grants were received, and it was difficult to choose the top four."

A committee of UT Southwestern faculty considered the applications, all with unusual approaches to basic scientific questions. The winning proposals each received $25,000.

New Wild-Hare projects are:

- Brian Davies, a graduate student in cell regulation, and mentor Dr. Bruce Horazdovsky, assistant professor of biochemistry, will study how enzymes that reside in the lysosome, the cell organelle responsible for the breakdown of proteins and other nutrients, actually get there from the cell's cytoplasm, where they are made. They ultimately plan to use the methodology

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they develop to study human lysosomal enzyme-sorting disorders – such as I-cell disease – with the intention of developing new treatments aimed at correcting the defect.

- Dr. Christian Wigley, a postdoctoral fellow in physiology, wants to help find a cure for Alzheimer's and AIDS. He is using his grant funds to develop a rapid, efficient screening method to test the ability of drugs to dissolve the insoluble plaques characteristic of Alzheimer's disease. The same method also could be applied to search for drugs that would inactivate a protein necessary for the progression of AIDS.

- Dr. Rolf Joho, associate professor in the Center for Basic Neuroscience, and Dr. Hanli Liu, adjunct assistant professor of biomedical engineering, will pursue a unique approach for correlating behaviors such as sleeping, waking, learning and memory with the brain's electrical activity.

- Dr. Kevin Luebke and Dr. Kathlynn Brown, assistant professors of internal medicine working in the Center for Biomedical Inventions, will utilize their grant to find a way to use a patient's own cells to replace a patient's damaged or diseased tissue.

In addition to the Wild Hare Idea Program, the Haberechts have supported several programs at Zale Lipshy University Hospital. In 1994 they also donated $250,000 to UT Southwestern's Fund for Molecular Research to establish the Rolf and Ute Haberecht Deanship of the UT Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, in Honor of Olga and Max Haberecht and Anna and Hans Schwarz.

Rolf Haberecht has served on the boards of Southwestern Medical Foundation, Zale Lipshy University Hospital, St. Mark's School of Texas, Episcopal School of Dallas and the Lamplighter School.

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