

# SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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## UT SOUTHWESTERN PARTICIPATES IN STUDY TO DETERMINE PROPER TREATMENT FOR INGUINAL HERNIA

DALLAS – April 20, 2000 – “Watchful waiting” may be better than surgery for treating inguinal hernias causing few symptoms, and doctors at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas and six other institutions are conducting a study of 753 men to test this theory.

An inguinal hernia is an abnormal space between the abdominal cavity and the groin. Men tend to develop this condition when muscle and connective tissue in the groin weaken.

“This weakness can be exacerbated by such things as heavy lifting, coughing or constipation,” said Dr. Larry Kim, a study investigator and assistant professor of GI/endocrine surgery at UT Southwestern. “Each year, approximately 700,000 men in the United States undergo surgical repair for inguinal hernia. This is one of the most common afflictions of men.”

Surgery is the preferred form of treatment when the condition interferes with a person’s normal activities. But doctors aren’t sure if surgery helps those with less symptomatic cases because the benefit of surgery is sometimes outweighed by the potential risks.

“The presence of an inguinal hernia is usually considered an indication for surgery; therefore, there’s not a lot of information on the role watchful waiting plays in treating minimally symptomatic patients,” said Dr. Joseph Murphy, a co-investigator in the study and assistant professor of burn/trauma/critical care at UT Southwestern.

“The data we collect will substantially increase our knowledge on the need for operating on inguinal hernias in men.”

The national study will compare the risks and benefits of watchful waiting vs. tension-free open repair. Half of the study participants will undergo surgery. Patients will be required to make occasional follow-up visits for up to five years. Patients will be treated at either UT Southwestern or the North Texas Health Care System, Dallas Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

Qualified applicants will receive \$15 for each office visit to defray any expenses.

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Other medical centers participating in the national trial include: Creighton University and the University of Nebraska Medical Center, both in Omaha; Los Angeles County Hospital and the University of Southern California at Los Angeles; Lovelace Medical Center in Albuquerque; and the Marshfield Clinic in Wisconsin.

The study is funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. It is sponsored and coordinated by the American College of Surgeons.

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