

# SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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## **SPINAL-CORD INJURY PROGRAMS EXTENDED AT UT SOUTHWESTERN WITH \$500,000 GIFT FROM KENT WALDREP FOUNDATION**

DALLAS – April 8, 2003 – The Kent Waldrep National Paralysis Foundation has given \$500,000 to develop an innovative clinical research program in spinal-cord injury at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas.

The funds were raised at the 2001 Southwestern Ball, an event that has provided more than \$10 million in the last decade for spinal-injury/nerve regeneration research at the medical center.

The contribution, along with funds from the Mobility Foundation Center Fund at Southwestern Medical Foundation, will enable UT Southwestern to extend its current basic research program in spinal paralysis into areas directly relevant to patients with spinal-cord injury.

Dr. Keith Tansey, assistant professor of neurology, will coordinate the clinical research program, which will be one of the few in the country to integrate laboratory spinal-cord injury research with clinical care.

“We are focused on furthering research and are intent on seeing the future transformed for those with spinal-cord injuries,” said Billie Ida Williamson, president of the Kent Waldrep National Paralysis Foundation. “As always, we are excited about the possibilities this new program will bring, and our aim is to develop a program in which we can find the best treatment modalities and clinical trials available.”

The clinical program will include an acute-care team, based at Parkland Memorial Hospital, that will specialize in trauma care and the stabilization of patients in the emergency room, surgery or intensive-care unit. An inpatient rehabilitation unit will treat recently injured patients, as well as those with chronic injuries who require long-term hospitalization, and an outpatient-care team will address the extended physical and neurological care of patients. Facilities are planned for carrying out human research and development on patients’ functional recoveries using the latest in robotic training technology.

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“Our goal is to bring spinal-cord injury research full circle, from bench to bedside,” said Tansey. “As physicians, we are often consumed with treating the consequences of spinal-cord injury – loss of mobility and other associated problems – but it is increasingly more important that we find a way to prevent these kinds of injuries from causing irreversible damage. If we can learn how to repair or retrain the injured spinal cord, our research stands to have major implications on a great number of other disorders that affect the brain and spinal cord.”

The Southwestern Ball began in 1990 when Kent Waldrep, who was paralyzed in a 1974 college football game, became concerned about the slow research progress into a cure for spinal-cord injury. In June 2000, the Waldrep Foundation reached its goal of providing \$10 million for a basic neuroscience research center at UT Southwestern, the single largest endowment for basic spinal-cord research in the United States. The new goal for the foundation is to raise money for clinical research on spinal-cord injury research that will build upon the basic research program and provide tangible benefits to patients.

“The Southwestern Ball’s funds will provide a major opportunity for clinical advances in spinal-cord injury,” said Dr. Kern Wildenthal, UT Southwestern president. “We are extremely grateful to Tim Wallace, chief executive officer of Trinity Industries, who chaired the Ball, and to all the volunteers at the Waldrep Foundation.”

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