

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED RESEARCHER FROM YALE JOINS UT SOUTHWESTERN AS CHAIRMAN OF PSYCHIATRY

DALLAS – Sept. 7, 2000 - Dr. Eric J. Nestler, a member of the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine, has been appointed chairman of psychiatry at UT Southwestern. Formerly director of molecular psychiatry at Yale University School of Medicine, his basic-science focus brings an added dimension to the Department of Psychiatry.

At Yale he also served as director for the Abraham Ribicoff Research Facilities and the Yale Center for Genes and Behavior.

Nestler, who succeeds Dr. Kenneth Altshuler, said his main goal at UT Southwestern will be to build the best psychiatry department in the country.

"It is a delight to take over from such a solid administration with strengths in research, education and especially the clinical area," he said.

A group of 20 psychiatry researchers, including assistant and associate professors, are following Nestler to UT Southwestern.

"We want to establish a new type of psychiatry that is a paradigm shift for the field," Nestler said. "We want to go forward into this new century coordinating the existing strengths of UT Southwestern's clinical program and melding basic-science discoveries into the human parts of medicine. Our desire is to identify the genes at risk for mental illness, to understand how they fit into human disease and to figure out better treatments."

Nestler, who will be the first holder of the Lou and Ellen McGinley Distinguished Chair in Psychiatric Research, plans to continue his molecular research while serving as chairman. He is well-known for his work on drug addiction and the chemistry of how drugs work in the brain. His focus is on the genetics of drug addiction – how certain genes make some people more

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resistant or susceptible to drugs.

Dr. Kern Wildenthal, president of UT Southwestern said the medical center is fortunate to attract such a national leader in the field of psychiatry as Nestler.

“Dr. Nestler, with his expertise in molecular genetics and mental illness, will bring a whole new emphasis to psychiatric research to the medical center,” Wildenthal said. “His commitment to excellence in clinical care, research and education will enhance the ongoing success of our psychiatry programs.”

Nestler has spent most of his career at Yale. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in molecular biophysics and biochemistry from Yale, as well as a master's of philosophy, a doctorate in pharmacology and a medical degree. He did an internship in medicine and psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and a residency and fellowship in psychiatry at Yale. In 1987 he joined the Yale faculty as an assistant professor of psychiatry and pharmacology.

Nestler has written 140 journal articles, five books and 75 chapters and review articles. He has been awarded many academic prizes and honors and is associate editor or on the editorial board of 10 scientific journals, including *Biological Psychiatry*, which will continue to be edited at UT Southwestern.

Altshuler, who is stepping down as chairman, will continue his work as a professor. The renowned psychiatrist came to UT Southwestern as chairman in 1977 from Columbia University and built the department into a nationally recognized unit with more than 100 faculty members. During Altschuler's tenure, the Department of Psychiatry became respected throughout the nation for its research and clinical work, especially in areas such as major depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders and schizophrenia.

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