

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION FUNDS MENTAL-HEALTH PROJECT

DALLAS – November 13, 1997 – The New Jersey-based Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has donated \$1.8 million to UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas to support a project to develop statewide mental-health treatment guidelines.

The Robert Wood Johnson donation follows a gift of \$719,000 by the Meadows Foundation of Dallas to the Texas Medication Algorithm Project (TMAP). The Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation (TDMHMR) has guaranteed the remaining funds for the \$5.6 million project, while further outside help is sought.

TMAP is developing medication guidelines for treating schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and major depression and will study the cost-effectiveness of their use in several community mental-health centers throughout the state. The project is the first of its kind and is a collaborative effort between UT Southwestern, TDMHMR, five other Texas medical and pharmacy schools, physicians who deliver the services, and patient and family advocates interested in better treatment outcomes for these illnesses.

Dr. Kenneth Altshuler, chairman of psychiatry at UT Southwestern and holder of the Stanton Sharp Distinguished Chair in Psychiatry, and Don Gilbert, commissioner of TDMHMR, will oversee the research. Dr. A. John Rush, vice chairman for research in psychiatry at UT Southwestern and holder of the Betty Jo Hay Distinguished Chair in Mental Health and the Rosewood Corporation Chair in Biomedical Science, and Dr. Steven Shon, medical director of TDMHMR, will serve as project co-directors. Dr. Lynn Crismon, professor of pharmacy at UT Austin, and Drs. Marcia Toprac and William Rago of TDMHMR also have played important roles in the project development.

With assets of more than \$5 billion, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is one of the nation's largest philanthropic foundations. The mission of the organization is to improve the health and health care of Americans. The foundation provides grants to further three goals: increasing

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access to basic health care for Americans of all ages, improving services for people with chronic illnesses and reducing the harm caused by substance abuse.

"Support of TMAP is an important endorsement by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which has always been in the vanguard of investigating innovative approaches," Altshuler said. "Those of us involved feel the project promises a new and important way of enhancing care in the public sector so that each patient is treated predictably and according to the best medical knowledge available."

TMAP has the "potential of being an enormous advance in the delivery of psychiatric care nationwide," according to TDMHMR's Gilbert. "The generous support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation will be invaluable in moving the project forward."

"The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is known for its well-informed and far-sighted approach to health-care philanthropy," said Dr. Kern Wildenthal, president of UT Southwestern. "We are grateful and appreciative that the foundation has recognized the importance of this research and has seen fit to offer its generous support."

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