UT SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL CENTER NEWS

Media Contact: Rachel Skei Donihoo
214-648-3404
rachel.donihoo@utsouthwestern.edu

Ted Nash Long Life Foundation awards $500,000 in grants to three UT Southwestern researchers

DALLAS – April 23, 2007 – Three UT Southwestern Medical Center researchers have received $500,000 in grants awarded by the Ted Nash Long Life Foundation, a fund created by a Waco businessman to support medical research aimed at increasing the length and quality of life.

Dr. Jerry Shay, vice chairman of cell biology will receive $100,000 for one year for his longevity studies. Dr. Woodring Wright, professor of cell biology, and Dr. Makoto Kuro-o, associate professor of pathology, will each receive $100,000 a year for two years.

This year the Ted Nash Long Life Foundation awarded $1.1 million to three medical institutions. Researchers at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center and the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., also received two-year grants. It is only the second time that the grants have been awarded. The foundation made its inaugural grants in 2004, including a two-year, $200,000 award to Dr. Shay for his work on tissue engineering.

A self-made millionaire, Ted Nash hoped that his foundation would one day benefit future generations. The program is limited to projects that are judged to have the potential to make quantum strides in medical research. All Texas medical schools and the Mayo Clinic, where Mr. Nash received much of his care before his death in 2002, are eligible to be considered for support.

"Ted Nash was earnest in his desire to leave a legacy that would make a difference in a lot of people's lives," said Daniel A. Palmer, a director of the foundation. "His interest was not only in curing disease, but in finding ways to prolong and better the lives of patients. He was committed to backing innovative and revolutionary research, which often is difficult to fund through traditional channels.

"We are big admirers of the quality of research being conducted at UT Southwestern, and we're proud to award these grants to Drs. Shay, Wright and Kuro-o. Their exciting research represents what the Ted Nash Long Life Foundation is really about, and we look forward to following them as they move forward in improving health care for patients around the world."

Mr. Nash made his fortune by following a structured investment strategy and savings

(MORE)

philosophy. He went to work for Electro-Motive, a division of General Motors, after serving as an Army officer during World War II. When Electro-Motive began a 1948 nationwide tour of the General Motors Train of Tomorrow, a new diesel-driven locomotive, Mr. Nash worked as a liaison to major railroad companies, relaying their concerns to Electro-Motive. After retiring from Electro-Motive, Mr. Nash worked with the General Motors Speakers Bureau, addressing high school and college students about social and economic issues.

Mr. Nash and his parents moved to Waco after he retired from GM in the mid-1970s.

Both Dr. Shay and Dr. Wright are world-renowned for their work on telomeres and telomerase – repeating sequences of DNA located at the end of each chromosome that are believed to function as a counting mechanism for cellular aging.

Dr. Shay, who jointly holds the Southland Financial Corporation Distinguished Chair in Geriatrics with Dr. Wright, said the Nash Foundation's grants allow researchers to take on high-risk projects.

"It's really these pilot-type grants that enable you to prove a concept and open up new fields of exploration," he said. "I'm so pleased that the foundation has decided to once again support my work, and I'm very excited about the new possibilities this generous grant will provide."

Dr. Wright said, "What is wonderful about an organization like the Ted Nash Long Life Foundation is that it provides an opportunity to explore areas that are too speculative or too great a leap of faith for traditional grant mechanisms.

"I am convinced that our ability to immortalize cells opens up unprecedented potential for the genetic modification of cells for therapeutic purposes. The Nash grant will allow us to attempt to create universal donor cells that lack a variety of transplantation antigens, so that cellular therapies can really move into the mainstream of practical medicine."

Dr. Kuro-o, a Southwestern Medical Foundation Scholar in Biomedical Research, is internationally recognized for his 1997 discovery of the *Klotho* gene, which he and his team named after one of the mythical Greeks who controlled the length of human life. Therapies based on *Klotho* could eventually prove to be a way to extend life or slow its aging effects.

(MORE)

Dr. Kuro-o currently is studying how *Klotho* regulates mitochondrial biogenesis and function. He said he is grateful for the Nash Foundation's support of this research into aging.

"Mitochondria is a double-edged sword because it produces ATP, the essential fuel for an organism's activity, but in doing so it also generates harmful reactive oxygen species, which damage proteins and DNA and accelerate aging," he said. "Understanding the regulatory mechanisms of mitochondrial function is critically important to the understanding of molecular mechanisms of aging, so I'm very grateful for this substantial and exciting grant, which will propel my research forward."

Dr. Kern Wildenthal, president of UT Southwestern, said, "These farsighted grants from the Nash Foundation will be instrumental to the success of some of the medical center's most innovative and promising research projects. We are proud to have again been selected to receive this prestigious support, and we are grateful for the foundation's commitment to our nation's aging population."

###

To automatically receive news releases from UT Southwestern via e-mail,
subscribe at www.utsouthwestern.edu/receivenews