Learn. Disb. Sym.

SWMS NEWS
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL SCHOOL AT DALLAS
5323 Harry Hines Boulevard, Dallas, Texas 75235
Contact: John Weeks

DALLAS--A small army of doctors, teachers and other professionals will focus on the multi-sided mystery of learning disabilities at a major symposium here Sept. 28 and 29.

Some 1,400 specialists from various disciplines concerned with diagnosing and treating children with learning disabilities will hear nationally prominent experts discuss medical, educational and behavioral aspects of the problem, during sessions at the Marriott Motor Hotel, 2101 Stemmons Freeway.

The symposium, first of its kind ever staged in the Dallas area, is being sponsored by the Pediatrics Department of The University of Texas Southwestern Medical School at Dallas, with financial support provided by the Jonsson Foundation of Dallas.

Participants, mostly from the Dallas-North Texas area, will include pediatricians, neurologists, educators, psychologists, social workers, speech and hearing pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, nutritionists and nurses. Parents representing state and local learning-disability associations also will attend.

Purpose of the interdisciplinary conference, said symposium coordinator Dr. Amy Talbot, "is to bring together people we see as the real experts around the country in the field of learning disabilities."

An estimated 5 to 10 per cent of all school-age children are afflicted by some degree of learning disability, school officials say. The subtle disorders including dyslexia and dysgraphia--difficulty in reading and writing, respectively--were largely unrecognized until recent years and have become subject of increasing concern and study.

Invited symposium speakers are in the process of scientific investigation and will report findings in their particular area of study, said Dr. Talbot, who is assistant professor and director of psychological services in Southwestern's Pediatrics Department.

--more--

"Our speakers are a unique group," she said. "We did not invite people who are proponents of a particular preconceived but unproven theory regarding learning disabilities."

Among those speakers is an educator well known for both his work in the delineation of learning problems and the development of remedial programs. He is Dr. Samuel A. Kirk, principal developer of a widely used test in the field, the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities.

Dr. Kirk, professor of special education at the University of Arizona and professor emeritus from the University of Illinois, will address the symposium's 8 p.m. dinner meeting Sept. 28 on the topic, "Is 'Learning Disabilities' a Specialty on Specialties?"

Other scheduled speakers include Dr. Herbert G. Birch, professor of pediatrics at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and professor of psychology and education, Yeshiva University, New York; Dr. Katrina deHirsch, consultant to the Department of Pediatrics at Columbia University.

Also Dr. Hans G. Furth, chairman of the Department of Psychology at the Catholic University of America; and Dr. Boyd McCandless, director of Educational Psychology at Emory University.

Dr. Heinz F. Eichenwald, chairman of the Department of Pediatrics at UT Southwestern and also the symposium's general chairman, will describe the work of Dallas' unique Research and Evaluation Center for Learning to the symposium audience. The center is a cooperative project of the medical school and the Dallas Independent School District for research into learning disabilities and experimental corrective education.

Also on the program will be Dr. Nolan Estes, superintendent of the Dallas schools; J. Erik Jonsson, former Dallas mayor and founder of the Jonsson Foundation; and Dr. Charles C. Sprague, president of UT Southwestern Medical School.

In all, 15 UTSWMS faculty members will take part in the smyposium sessions, which begin at 9:30 a.m. Sept. 28. Attendance is limited to registered participants and members of the communications media, officials said.

Other members of the symposium committee besides Drs. Eichenwald and Talbot are Dr. Ray W. Gilbert, Dr. Raleigh Huizinga and Dr. Frank D. Ohler, all of the medical school pediatrics faculty.

SEPTEMBER 22, 1972