

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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UT SOUTHWESTERN RESEARCHERS FIND BLOOD TESTS CAN DETECT IF ULCER IS CURED

Dallas - September 30, 1998- A blood test can determine if a person is rid of the bacterium that causes most ulcers, reducing the need for more expensive and time-consuming tests, according to a clinical study by UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas researchers.

"A blood test should be used as a preliminary evaluation tool and could eliminate the need for costly alternatives that sometimes involve invasive endoscopic procedures," said Dr. Mark Feldman, professor of internal medicine at UT Southwestern and chief of medical service at the Veterans Affairs North Texas Health Care System of Dallas.

The source of *Helicobacter pylori* (H. pylori) infection - suspected of being the chief agent in the formation of duodenal and peptic ulcers - is usually unknown, but infection appears to occur during childhood.

Depending on age, 30 percent to 50 percent of the U.S. population is infected, but only a small percentage will develop symptoms, said Feldman, holder of the Southland Financial Corporation Distinguished Chair in Geriatrics at UT Southwestern.

The study, conducted at the Dallas Veterans Affairs Medical Center, examined 23 volunteers without previous history of peptic ulcer or chronic upper gastrointestinal tract symptoms who tested positive for H. pylori. They were treated with a two-week course of antibiotics and were evaluated after one month, three months and 18 months. Biopsies confirmed that 15 of the volunteers were cured.

Following treatment, blood samples were tested for H. pylori antibodies. Results with a shift from positive to negative signaled a successful treatment.

(MORE)

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The study was published in a July issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association* and is a collaboration between researchers at UT Southwestern and the VA North Texas Health Care System. UT Southwestern researchers who participated in the study include Dr. Byron Cryer, assistant professor of internal medicine, and Dr. Edward Lee, professor of pathology.

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