UT SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL CENTER NEWS

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UT Southwestern recruiting patients for heart-failure device study

DALLAS – Oct. 17, 2006 – Physicians at UT Southwestern Medical Center are part of a multinational clinical trial evaluating a unique implantable device designed to treat a larger number of patients with heart failure.

UT Southwestern is one of the top enrolling centers of the 50 sites in the United States. The Optimizer System is an implantable pulse generator that delivers electrical impulses to the heart for treatment of moderate to severe heart failure. Unlike other heart-failure devices, the Optimizer works by strengthening the pumping force of the heart. The Optimizer System modulates the strength of the heart's contractions rather than controls its rhythm.

"The Optimizer could benefit up to two-thirds of advanced heart-failure patients who may not qualify for other kinds of therapy," said Dr. Jose Joglar, co-investigator of the study and associate professor of medicine in UT Southwestern's Heart, Lung and Vascular Center.

Heart failure is a disease that afflicts more than five million Americans and an estimated 15 million patients worldwide and is one of the most common causes of hospitalization. In patients with heart failure, the heart muscle itself is too weak or damaged to pump enough blood through the body. Medications such as beta blockers and other device-based therapies are typically used to treat patients with heart failure. But not all patients respond to these initial therapies.

"In spite of the advances made over the last 15 years, heart failure remains a common cause of death or disability," said Dr. Owen Obel, cardiologist and assistant professor of internal medicine. "This novel therapy stimulates the heart as it is beating. This makes each heart beat stronger for the time that the device is activated. It could really make a positive impact, sometimes dramatic, in the quality of life for the many thousands of people worldwide who suffer from severe heart-failure symptoms."

Dr. Obel, who heads the electrophysiology and pacing laboratory at the Dallas Veteran Affairs Medical Center, is co-investigator for the UT Southwestern trial and has implanted the devices in the five patients who were selected to the study group receiving the implant. Three additional patients are due to receive the device soon. The study will continue to enroll participants until the end of the year.

Patients who qualify for the Optimizer System undergo a surgical procedure similar to putting in a pacemaker. Typically, the surgery takes about four to five hours and requires three leads to be

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implanted into the heart itself.

"We've been enrolling patients for more than a year now and so far our experiences have been good and patients have felt tremendous improvement," said Dr. Joglar.

Potential study participants, or those who would like more information, should call 214-590-5015.

The UT Southwestern Heart, Lung and Vascular Center is a collaborative effort between UT Southwestern faculty and community physicians who unite to bring their clinical and surgical expertise to patients needing cardiac, pulmonary or vascular care. Seamless, individualized care is available for adult congenital heart disease, cardiac imaging, cardiovascular and thoracic surgery, electrophysiology, general cardiology, heart failure, heart and lung transplant, interventional cardiology, interventional radiology, lung transplant pulmonology, mechanical circulatory assistance, preventive cardiology, pulmonary hypertension, and vascular and endovascular surgery.

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About UT Southwestern Medical Center

UT Southwestern Medical Center, one of the premier medical centers in the nation, integrates pioneering biomedical research with exceptional clinical care and education. Its more than 1,400 full-time faculty members – including four active Nobel prize winners, more than any other medical school in the world – are responsible for groundbreaking medical advances and are committed to translating science-driven research quickly to new clinical treatments. UT Southwestern physicians provide medical care in 40 specialties to nearly 89,000 hospitalized patients and oversee 2.1 million outpatient visits a year.

Physicians care for patients in the Dallas-based UT Southwestern Medical Center; in Parkland Health & Hospital System, which is staffed primarily by UT Southwestern physicians; and in its affiliated hospitals, Children's Medical Center Dallas and the VA North Texas Health Care System. UT Southwestern programs are offered in Waco, Wichita Falls, Richardson, Plano/Frisco and Fort Worth. Three degree-granting institutions – UT Southwestern Medical School, UT Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and UT Southwestern Allied Health Sciences School – train 4,000 students, residents and fellows each year. UT Southwestern researchers undertake more than 2,500 research projects annually, totaling more than $340 million.

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