

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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UT SOUTHWESTERN NEUROLOGIST HONORED FOR RESEARCH ON LOU GEHRIG'S DISEASE

DALLAS – June 3, 1998 – In recognition of his groundbreaking neuromuscular disease research, Dr. Jeffrey Elliott has received the 1998 Distinguished Young Researcher Award from the President's Research Council at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas.

The assistant professor of neurology has dedicated his professional life to researching amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), commonly known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, which is characterized by the progressive loss of motor nerve cells (motor neurons). Though researchers have not determined the cause of the most common forms of the fatal disease, abnormalities in one gene (copper-zinc superoxide dismutase) have been found to cause an inherited form of ALS. Elliott is investigating factors that may contribute to the degeneration of those motor neurons by studying how this altered gene, when injected into transgenic mice models, causes neuron death. By doing this Elliott hopes to help unlock the mystery behind ALS and other neuromuscular diseases.

"If we can uncover what makes motor neurons particularly vulnerable---or resistant---to disease, we may be able to change the course of ALS," he said. "I'm honored by the opportunity to do this important research and am excited about what it may mean to the patients whose lives are so dramatically shortened by this debilitating disorder."

Elliott first became fascinated with neurological diseases as a medical student at Washington University Medical Center in St. Louis. "The patients were such brave, remarkable people," said Elliott. "Even when faced with a devastating disease, they retained hope and perseverance. I knew immediately that I wanted to find a way to improve the quality of their lives."

Dr. Kern Wildenthal, president of UT Southwestern, said Dr. Elliott "is an exceptionally

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talented young physician and scientist. We are glad that is possible to honor him and to assist his research at a critical time in his career."

After earning his medical degree in 1988, Elliott went on to complete an internship, residency and fellowship in neuromuscular disease at Washington University Medical Center. While in medical school, he was awarded the Robert Carter Medical School Prize and the Jacques J. Bronfenbrenner Award in Infectious Diseases.

Elliott, who joined the UT Southwestern faculty in 1997, has published more than a dozen research papers and review articles. He is a member of the American Academy of Neurology and the Society for Neuroscience and a fellow of the American Association of Electrodiagnostic Medicine. He receives funding from the National Institutes of Health and the ALS Association.

The President's Research Council is an organization of community leaders who are interested in learning about and advancing medical research at UT Southwestern. Members are invited to four lectures annually given by the medical center's leading researchers. Membership fees support research by new faculty investigators at the center.

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