

News

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas
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*****First Liver Foundation head
announced.

DALLAS--Dr. Burton Combes, Chairman of the Board of the American Liver Foundation, has announced the appointment of Walter J. Unger as the foundation's first executive director.

The American Liver Foundation was established in 1976 as a national voluntary health agency concerned with the understanding, prevention and cure of liver diseases. "The foundation hopes to develop support to accomplish these aims through professional and public education and by supporting research training of young scientific investigators," said Combes, who is professor of internal medicine at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas and one of the country's foremost liver researchers.

The new ALF director has an extensive background in the health field. He has been a private consultant to a number of academic health centers and other health care institutions. Unger served for four and one-half years as special assistant to the president of the Institute of Medicine, a branch of the prestigious National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C.

Prior to moving to the nation's capital in 1973, Unger served for three years on the health sciences development staff of the University of Southern California from which he had previously received bachelors and masters degrees. In addition, he has served as the administrator of the Good Hope Medical Foundation in Los Angeles and as an agent and supervisor for a major mutual insurance company. The administrator has also completed all the examinations of the Chartered Life Underwriters.

first add w.j.unger

In accepting this appointment, Unger says: "Liver diseases account for a significant--and largely unrecognized--cost to the nation's health and economy. The economic burden of cirrhosis, hepatitis and other liver disorders is estimated to exceed four and one-half billion dollars annually. Their social and economic impact is enormous and, to a great extent, needless.

"Liver diseases in general, and alcoholic liver diseases in particular, appear to be on the increase in the United States, Canada and many other advanced industrial nations. Today, cirrhosis, a chronic disease which impairs liver function, is America's fifth most common cause of death, and for many persons afflicted with this disease, the present outlook is very bleak.

"Fortunately, many liver diseases can be prevented, but regrettably most Americans seem to be unaware of this. I sincerely hope that the American Liver Foundation's educational programs, which we have just begun to design, will go far toward reducing both the widespread prevalence of liver diseases and the suffering of those Americans afflicted with these health problems."

The American Liver Foundation's national office is located at 8506 Lynwood Place, Chevy Chase, Maryland 20015 (telephones: 301; 654-8510 and 654-8511). Regional offices are located in Dallas, Texas (telephone: 214; 688-3440) and in New Haven, Connecticut (telephone: 203; 432-4861).

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Note to editors: a photograph of Mr. Unger is available on request. Interviews with him may be arranged by calling 301; 654-8510 or 301; 654-8511.

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