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Ravenell named recipient of grant from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

DALLAS – Jan. 7, 2008 – Dr. Joseph Ravenell, assistant professor of internal medicine at UT Southwestern Medical Center, has received a Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development Award from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The \$416,558 award supports his research for the next four years.

The Harold Amos award was created to increase the number of academic medicine faculty from historically disadvantaged ethnic, financial or educational backgrounds. The awards identify researchers who have excelled in their education and who have completed or are completing formal clinical training. Recipients are committed to pursuing academic careers, serving as role models for students and fellow faculty, decreasing health disparities, and improving the health and well-being of the underserved.

A native of New Jersey, Dr. Ravenell completed medical school at the University of Chicago, where he first became interested in academic medicine and in treating underserved patients.

“I had the opportunity to work on a black men’s health project where we did focus groups with underserved patients,” said Dr. Ravenell, who completed his residency at the University of Pennsylvania and a clinical epidemiology fellowship at Cornell University Medical Center. “The results of that study were used to get funding to start a black men’s health clinic.”

He was recruited to UT Southwestern in 2005 by Dr. Ronald Victor, professor of internal medicine and principal investigator of the Barbershop Project, a barber-run program aimed at improving diagnosis and treatment of hypertension in black men. Dr. Ravenell said the Barbershop Project is key in linking clinical work and research designed to benefit underserved patients.

Dr. Ravenell said funding from the Harold Amos award will allow him to study a phenomenon known as “physician inertia,” where doctors may be reluctant to aggressively treat hypertension in African-American men.

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“I’m interested in studying reasons why doctors may not be more aggressive in initiating or intensifying therapy for high blood pressure,” he said. “Poorly controlled hypertension in patients can have severe and devastating consequences.”

The award was named in honor of Dr. Harold Amos, who was the first African-American to chair a department, now the Department of Microbiology and Medical Genetics, at Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Ravenell is the seventh UT Southwestern researcher to win this prestigious grant. Other UT Southwestern winners and the years grants were received include: Dr. Richard King, assistant professor of neurology (2006); Dr. Ohwofiemu Nwariaku, associate professor of surgery (2002); former faculty members Dr. Edsel Arce-Hernandez (1999), Dr. Carmela Morales (1996) and Dr. Ivor Benjamin (1985); and former fellow Dr. David Wilkes (1992).

Visit <http://www.utsouthwestern.org/patientcare/medicalservices/hlv.html> to learn more about UT Southwestern’s clinical services in hypertension.

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