

Media Contact: Deborah Wormser
214-648-3404
deborah.wormser@utsouthwestern.edu

Internationally acclaimed immunologist to lead new center at UT Southwestern

DALLAS – May 5, 2011 – Dr. Bruce Beutler, an internationally recognized leader in immunology and member of the National Academy of Sciences, has been appointed the founding director of a new Center for the Genetics of Host Defense at UT Southwestern Medical Center.

Dr. Beutler currently is chairman of the Department of Genetics at Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, Calif., where he has developed one of the most robust gene discovery programs in the world, employing germline mutagenesis and careful analysis of relevant phenotypes. While his primary focus is on the genetics of innate immunity, the implications of his findings are broadly relevant to host responses to viral infection, cancer development and autoimmunity.

Dr. Greg Fitz, executive vice president for academic affairs, provost and dean of UT Southwestern Medical School, said Dr. Beutler's recruitment represents the culmination of a campus-wide initiative.

"The scientific leadership of the medical center through the Six-Year Planning Committee identified exploration of the interface between man and microbe as one of the most important frontiers in science," Dr. Fitz said. "They also articulated an equal need for broader application of state-of-the-art technologies in genomics and bioinformatics. Dr. Beutler has a remarkable history of accomplishment in both of these domains and will bring these considerable talents to UT Southwestern at a crucial time."

Dr. Beutler, who started his scientific career at UT Southwestern as an internal medicine intern and neurology resident, served as a faculty member from 1986 to 2000 and was an investigator for the Howard Hughes Medical Institute at UT Southwestern during those years.

"These were the most important years of my career," said Dr. Beutler. "I was encouraged to pick a single, tough problem in my field and solve it. I chose the problem I considered essential to the field: to find the receptor for lipopolysaccharide. It was a daunting project. But the atmosphere at UT Southwestern was a special one. Many outstanding laboratories were using genetic methods to solve fundamental problems in biology and medicine. Almost weekly, I learned of a new triumph by one group or another. And so I felt that we, too, would succeed, no matter how tough the job might seem."

Dr. Beutler's original studies at UT Southwestern led to the identification of tumor necrosis

(MORE)

Beutler – 2

factor as a key mediation of inflammation and to the identification of Toll-like receptors as sensors that alert the host immune system when infection is present. These discoveries are cornerstones of the understanding of innate immunity and have opened doors to advances in many related areas. Dr. Beutler's current research involves using sophisticated mutagenesis and phenotypic analysis to discover the molecular underpinnings of the complex pathways involved in the host response to infection.

"The recruitment and return of Dr. Beutler to UT Southwestern further validates this institution's commitment to accelerating the discoveries of basic research and its applicability to our patients. Trained and mentored as an early investigator by the very best scientists here, Dr. Beutler went on to achieve in a very short time many of the highest recognitions attainable by an American scientist and physician," said Dr. Daniel Podolsky, president of UT Southwestern.

Dr. Beutler completed his undergraduate work at the University of California, San Diego, and earned his medical degree from the University of Chicago. After postgraduate training at UT Southwestern, he completed a two-year fellowship at Rockefeller University.

Dr. Beutler has received numerous awards, including the Robert Koch Prize in 2004, the Gran Prix Charles-Léopold Mayer from the Académie des Sciences in France in 2006, the Balzan Prize in 2007, the Albany Medical Center Prize in Medicine and Biomedical Research in 2009, and the University of Chicago Professional Achievement Citation in 2010. In 2008, the same year he was elected to the National Academy of Sciences, he was also named to the Institute of Medicine.

###

This news release is available on our World Wide Web home page at
www.utsouthwestern.edu/home/news/index.html

To automatically receive news releases from UT Southwestern via email,
subscribe at www.utsouthwestern.edu/receivenews