

news *THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT DALLAS*

southwestern medical school - graduate school of biomedical sciences - school of allied health sciences

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****New organization to be formed for
victims of muscular disease
Myasthenia Gravis at Oct.28 meeting

DALLAS--An organizational meeting for a new Dallas-Fort Worth area chapter of the national Myasthenia Gravis Foundation will be held at 8 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 28, on the campus of The University of Texas Health Science Center here.

All persons in the region who have the baffling disease, which results in muscle weakness, are invited to attend, along with family members, physicians, hospital staff and other interested individuals. The meeting will be in Room D1.104 at the UT Health Center, 5323 Harry Hines Blvd.

Goal of the chapter is to bring together those concerned with the disease for the mutual benefit of all, said Dr. Roger Rosenberg, who is neurology chairman at the UT center's Southwestern Medical School, and who is serving as medical advisor to the group.

"There is a great need to organize all people who have Myasthenia Gravis in the community and surrounding area," he said. The chapter will provide patients with information about the disease and others who have it, inform physicians who may not be familiar with its sometimes difficult-to-recognize symptoms, and assure availability of proper medication needed for controlling the debilitating disorder.

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first add myasthenia gravis

Dr. Rosenberg, a member of the national MG foundation's medical advisory board, will address the formative session on "Current Concepts of Myasthenia Gravis." Harold Zierler, administrative director of the New York-based foundation, will greet the group and show a short educational film. A question and answer period will follow.

There presently are some 100 diagnosed cases of the relatively rare malady in Dallas, Fort Worth and surrounding area, plus others probably undetected, Dr. Rosenberg estimates.

While not now curable, MG is medically manageable through a careful combination of medications designed to improve metabolism at the junction between the nerves and muscles, Dr. Rosenberg explained. Victims experience a gradual onset of weakness and later are subject to periodic crisis episodes of breathing and swallowing difficulty requiring hospitalization.

Because of its rarity and vague early symptoms, the disease sometimes is mistaken for conditions often associated with psychological stress, general fatigue or nervous tension. Proper diagnosis requires a careful neurological evaluation.

The Dallas-Fort Worth MG chapter will be the state's fourth and the only one serving a wide area of North Texas and neighboring states. It will provide a useful hub for interaction between patients, medical practitioners, researchers and health care specialists, Dr. Rosenberg observed.

"A lot of good can come of this," he said, "by making patients aware that they can get help wherever they are, through a network of units around the country."

(more)

second add myasthenia gravis

The new organization also will be beneficial to medical scientists such as Dr. Rosenberg and other members of the local neurological community who are studying the mysterious malady which afflicts an estimated 240,000 persons across the nation.

The UT neurology chairman and his Health Science Center associates are conducting research having implications for Myasthenia Gravis and related "neurotransmitter" diseases. Neurotransmitters are chemical compounds made by one nerve cell which, in turn, affect an adjacent cell to pass along the brain's message.

Problems in the body's production of one such neurotransmitter--acetylcholine--are believed at fault in Myasthenia Gravis. By chemically "tagging" and tracing the substances acted upon by enzymes that make and break down acetylcholine, the Dallas scientists hope to pinpoint the precise biochemical problem that may cause failure of this neurotransmitter to stimulate muscle fibers properly.

Nationally, the non-profit MG foundation supports research, disseminates information about Myasthenia Gravis and assists in providing patient services.

Persons desiring further information about the Oct. 28 meeting may call Joan Shapiro at the "Dallas MG number," (214) 690-1302.