

# SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

Media Contact: Donna Steph Hansard  
214-648-3404

[donna.hansard@utsouthwestern.edu](mailto:donna.hansard@utsouthwestern.edu)

## **PROFESSORSHIP IN MITOCHONDRIAL DISEASE ESTABLISHED AT UT SOUTHWESTERN**

DALLAS – April 22, 2002 – At least one in every 4,000 children is born with some form of mitochondrial disease – a genetic illness all too familiar to several North Texas families and their friends, who have joined together to establish the first professorship in mitochondrial disease research at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas.

Designated the Mary Quincy Parsons and Kelsey Louise Wright Professorship in Mitochondrial Disease Research, the endowment was funded by gifts from six donors. It was named for Mary Quincy Parsons, 9, and Kelsey Louise Wright, 20, both of whom suffer from the disease.

Southwestern Medical Foundation received donations of \$50,000 from the William Wright Family Foundation and \$25,000 from the K.H. Jordan Foundation to establish the professorship at UT Southwestern. Major gifts from the Michael L. Rosenberg Foundation, the Barnett Family Foundation Trust, Jerry and Jane Clarke McManus, and Mary P. Clarke provided additional funding.

“Mitochondrial disease is a genetic disorder that is very difficult to diagnose,” said Jane McManus, grandmother of Mary Quincy Parsons. “For this reason, her parents (Kathryn and Jeff Parsons) and I are interested in getting involved with the medical community and educating physicians around the Southwest about this disease.

“This professorship is the beginning of what we hope will be a tremendous initiative to raise awareness and begin research and treatment of mitochondrial disease. Our goal for the future is to build a world-class research and treatment center in this area.”

Dr. Michael J. Bennett, professor of pathology and pediatrics at UT Southwestern and director of clinical chemistry at Children’s Medical Center of Dallas, will be the first holder of the professorship.

“We do our research in a somewhat narrow field that most people are unfamiliar with, so

(MORE)

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL CENTER AT DALLAS**

Southwestern Medical School • Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences • Southwestern Allied Health Sciences School  
Affiliated teaching hospitals and outpatient clinics

Office of News and Publications • 5323 Harry Hines Blvd., Dallas TX 75390-9060 • Telephone (214) 648-3404 • FAX (214) 648-9119



## **MITOCHONDRIAL DISEASE - 2**

we are hopeful this generous gift will help draw attention to this illness,” Bennett said.

Mitochondrial disease affects the body’s mitochondria, organelles found in every cell of the body and responsible for the body’s energy production. Malfunctioning mitochondria cause chronic and often fatal diseases.

Inherited diseases of the mitochondria appear to cause the most damage to cells of the brain, heart, liver, skeletal muscles, kidney, and the endocrine and respiratory systems. Mitochondrial defects have also been linked to Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, diabetes, autism, heart disease and the aging process.

Dr. Kern Wildenthal, president of UT Southwestern, expressed his appreciation to Mrs. McManus for spearheading fund-raising efforts for the endowment, as well as to all the donors for their contributions. “We are sincerely grateful to all the individuals and their foundations who are providing the means to enhance and expand our research efforts into mitochondrial disease,” he said.

###