

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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UT Southwestern Microbiologist Elected to National Academy of Sciences

DALLAS - April 28, 1994 - Dr. Ellen S. Vitetta, professor of microbiology at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, has been elected to the National Academy of Sciences -- one of the highest honors attainable by an American scientist.

Vitetta, who holds the Scheryle Simmons Patigian Distinguished Chair in Cancer Immunobiology and serves as director of the Cancer Immunobiology Center, is the 11th member of the UT Southwestern faculty to be elected to the Academy since 1979, when the first was inducted. Only five other Texas medical scientists -- from Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston and The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center -- have ever been elected.

Vitetta, who is president of the American Association of Immunologists, is considered an international authority on B lymphocytes and, more recently, on immunotoxins in cancer therapy.

"I'm in shock," Vitetta said upon learning of her election to the Academy. "I was really, truly, shocked. I had no idea this was happening. This is a great personal pleasure."

Election to the academy is the "recognition by your peers that your science means something," Vitetta said. Vitetta's

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research involves the use of biological agents to kill cancer cells through targeted therapy. "It is also important for the NAS to recognize the contributions of female scientists," she added. Vitetta is the first woman member of the UT Southwestern faculty elected to membership in the Academy.

"I'm also gratified by the support I've felt among other UT Southwestern faculty members - especially my colleagues who have already been elected to the Academy. Their support means a lot."

Dr. Kern Wildenthal, UT Southwestern president, said, "Dr. Vitetta is an outstanding scientist and educator. Her election to the Academy is testimony to the exceptional quality of her research and brings honor to UT Southwestern."

Added Dr. William Neaves, dean of UT Southwestern Medical School: "Dr. Vitetta is internationally known for her pioneering work in the development of immunotoxins for use in cancer therapy. She is also a national leader in immunology and an exceptionally effective teacher."

"In addition to her election to the National Academy of Sciences, Dr. Vitetta has today also received an Outstanding Teaching Award from second-year medical students at UT Southwestern."

Vitetta received her undergraduate degree from Connecticut College and her master's and doctoral degrees from New York University Graduate School. Since joining the UT Southwestern

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faculty in 1974, she has directed the work of more than 50 doctoral students and post graduate fellows in microbiology.

She was named professor of microbiology in 1976. She was appointed director of the Cancer Immunobiology Center in 1988. Vitetta has published more than 350 professional papers and journal articles. She also serves on the editorial boards of numerous publications and is president of the American Association of Immunologists.

The National Academy of Science was created in 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln to act as an official adviser to the federal government on matters of science and technology. The only other Texas researcher being elected to the Academy this year is Marye Anne Fox, Waggoner Regent's Chair in Chemistry and director, Center for Fast Kinetics Research at The University of Texas in Austin.

The 11 faculty members of UT Southwestern who are members of the National Academy of Sciences and the year they were elected are:

Ronald W. Estabrook, Ph.D., 1979; Michael S. Brown, M.D., 1980; Joseph L. Goldstein, M.D., 1980; Samuel M. McCann, M.D., 1983; Jean D. Wilson, M.D., 1983; Jonathan Uhr, M.D., 1984; Alfred Gilman, M.D., Ph.D., 1985; Roger Unger, M.D., 1986; James Hudspeth, Ph.D., M.D., 1991; David Garbers, Ph.D., 1993; Ellen Vitetta, Ph.D., 1994.