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News

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas
5323 Harry Hines Boulevard Dallas, Texas 75235 (214)688-3404

CONTACT: Ann Harrell
Office: 214/688-3404
Home: 214/369-2695

***Neonatologist heads Pediatrics at UTHSCD

DALLAS--The new chairman of Pediatrics at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas believes that newborn babies need a strong advocacy group at the national level.

"Certain diseases that have captured public interest such as muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis and diabetes--set aside funds for children, but there is no group to speak for the newborn who can suffer from insults occurring during pregnancy, birth or early infancy. That's where the money should go," says Dr. Joseph B. Warshaw, internationally known neonatologist who began his new chairmanship July 15.

"Newborns can't form their own constituency. It's hard to get money for research in neonatology," says the physician, "because newborns don't vote. Also, their families are usually young and don't have much money themselves. We must take a longer view."

Warshaw says that pediatrics is an area that has a mission to focus on problems that come with biological development from the fetus stage to infancy to adolescence.

The chairman says he takes a broad view of developmental biology, an area he defines as "understanding the basic mechanism of developmental physiology and the biology of processes that result in congenital malformations and different kinds of susceptibility to environmental insults."

First, you try to understand normal development, says Warshaw. Then you look at the effects of the environment--including toxins and drugs--on normal development with an eye toward prevention.

"Prevention is always best," says the neonatologist.

Warshaw, who has most recently been professor of Pediatrics and Obstetrics and Gynecology at Yale University School of Medicine and its director of the Division of Perinatal Medicine, is setting high goals for his department. He also said that he will be actively recruiting new faculty members.

"We want to advance knowledge and have the highest degree of scholarship that can exist while making sure our models for the training of physicians are the best they can be.

"You do that by trying to find the best people who are at the forefront of their specialties."

Pediatrics, says Warshaw is a critical field in medicine because of the potential to prevent problems that are much more costly, both emotionally and physically, if they are not solved.

"It's also exciting to look at disease in the context of change--both biological and social--working with infants and children."

The chairman expects to have an active research program himself. His interests include maturational events that equip the newborn to survive, the toxic effects of oxygen in lung and other tissues, metabolic changes that take place at the time of birth and the response of certain lung cells to hormones and other growth factors.

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Warshaw says the department will soon be adding an immunology section and expanding activities in the genetics area. He is looking forward to interaction between faculty in his department with researchers in the basic sciences and some of the other clinical departments.

"Part of the fun will be the general enthusiasm and attitudes of the people in interacting. This spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm here was one of the main attractions for my coming."

A graduate of the University of Florida and Duke University Medical School, Warshaw was program director of the Developmental Medicine Training Program at Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard. His academic title was associate professor of Pediatrics. From 1971 till 1973 the physician was associate pediatrician at Massachusetts General Hospital and physician in Maternal and Child Health at Boston Lying-In Hospital. He was also a staff scientist at Boston Biomedical Research Institute.

Warshaw served as tutor in the medical sciences at Harvard Medical School and as associate pediatrician at Shriners Burn Institute from 1969 till 1972. He was also associate professor of Pediatrics at Harvard, assistant professor of Pediatrics at Massachusetts General, a research associate with the Retina Foundation, consultant in maternal and child health at Boston Lying-In Hospital and assistant pediatrician at Massachusetts General.

Other educational experiences included working as a fellow in the Department of Bioenergetics Research, Retina Foundation, Institute of Biological and Medical Sciences, Boston; research associate in the Gerontology Branch of NIH; visiting physician at Baltimore City Hospitals; senior resident in Pediatrics at Duke; assistant resident in Pediatrics at the University of Rochester; an intern in Medicine and Pediatrics at the University of Rochester; and a predoctoral trainee at the National Institutes of Health. Warshaw participated in a research training program at Duke University Medical School under guidance of Dr. Salih Wakil.

He is a diplomate of the American Board of Pediatrics and holds memberships in the Society for Pediatric Research, the American Pediatric Society, the New England Pediatric Society, the American Society for Cell Biology, the American Society for Clinical Investigation, the American Society of Biological Chemists and the American Society for Developmental Biology. Warshaw is a member of the Research Advisory Committee of the National Foundation, March of Dimes; the Written Examination Subcommittee's Sub-board in Neonatal/Perinatal Medicine; the Advisory Board of the Mead Johnson Seminars in Perinatal and Development Medicine and served on the Human Embryology and Development Study Section of NIH from 1974 till 1978.

The physician was a Josiah Macy Jr. Faculty Scholar at the University of Oxford in 1979-80 and is associate editor of both Pediatric Research and Early Human Development. In addition, Warshaw is president of the Society for Pediatric Research.

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