

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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OLSON ELECTED TO AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

DALLAS – May 22, 1998 – The American Academy of Arts and Sciences has elected Dr. Eric Olson, chairman of molecular biology and oncology at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, to membership in the prestigious academy.

"I am honored that the American Academy of Arts and Sciences felt our work was worthy of its recognition, and I am grateful to the members of my laboratory for their accomplishments," said Olson, director of the Nancy B. and Jake L. Hamon Center for Basic Research in Cancer and holder of the Nancy B. and Jake L. Hamon Distinguished Chair in Basic Cancer Research.

Olson studies basic regulatory mechanisms in developmental biology, including those that control formation of the heart and vasculature. Most recently he and collaborators were able to block the formation of enlarged hearts in mice using the immunosuppressant drugs cyclosporine A and FK506. He and his colleagues discovered a molecular pathway leading to heart enlargement and tested their hypotheses by genetically engineering mice with congenital cardiac hypertrophy. The progression from cardiac hypertrophy to heart failure to death in those mice mirrored that seen in humans. Clinical trials are expected to begin shortly.

Congress enacted the academy's charter in 1780. Today the academy consists of 3,300 fellows and 550 foreign honorary members who exemplify achievement in science, scholarship, the arts and public affairs. Olson was one of 146 fellows and 22 foreign honorary members elected April 17.

The academy directs a program of projects, studies and publications regarding critical issues and current topics confronting society.

Olson is the 12th faculty member elected to the academy from UT Southwestern. The others are: Dr. Donald Seldin (1974), Dr. Michael Brown (1981), Dr. Joseph Goldstein (1981), Dr. Jean Wilson (1982), Dr. Samuel McCann (1987), Dr. Alfred Gilman (1988), Dr. Daniel Foster (1992), Dr. David Garbers (1992), Dr. Jonathan Uhr (1993), Dr. Roger Unger (1994) and Dr. Paul MacDonald (1997). Dr. Steven McKnight (1992), chairman of biochemistry, was elected to the academy prior to joining UT Southwestern.

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