

# SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

Contact: Brian Cofer  
214-648-3404  
brian.cofer@utsouthwestern.edu

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## **UT SOUTHWESTERN LAUNCHES LOCAL BIOMEDICAL INITIATIVE; VENTURE TO DEVELOP VACCINES, BUILD DALLAS INDUSTRY**

DALLAS – Feb. 2, 2001 – The Center for Biomedical Inventions at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas has launched its first technology partnership, marking a milestone in the center's efforts to help build a biomedical industry in North Texas.

A licensing agreement gives Dallas-based Eliance Biotechnology Inc. exclusive development rights for technology that will perform large-scale genetic screenings that will reinvent the way vaccines are developed. The name Eliance is derived from the acronym given to the patented technology the company is commercializing, "Expression Library Immunization" or ELI.

ELI is a process of high-volume screening of genomes for immunologically useful agents like vaccines. It identifies antigens, or resistance agents, within pathogens like viruses and bacteria that could possibly be developed into vaccines.

"It's a novel approach," said Dr. Dennis Stone, UT Southwestern vice president for technology development. "It differs from conventional vaccine development approaches, which simply build on already-existing knowledge. ELI takes a step back and examines every possible antigen within any pathogen for its ability to provide immune protection against the pathogen."

The Center for Biomedical Inventions was established in 1998 to allow UT Southwestern to build on its own scientific and technical breakthroughs. It resulted from an initiative launched by several groups working in cooperation, including UT Southwestern, the city of Dallas, the Greater Dallas Chamber of Commerce and the Dallas Plan to turn North Texas into a biotechnology center, specifically in a corridor along Harry Hines Boulevard.

"In the past, we would sign licensing agreements with outside companies before much value was added, thereby leaving UT Southwestern with less control over the technology. It

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often ended up with companies located in places like San Francisco or Boston,” said Dr. Stephen Johnston, director of the biomedical inventions center. “We now can add more value to the technology we develop before it is licensed. Most importantly, we have added enough value to keep the technology in Dallas.”

Eliance was formed as an equity-based deal with \$2.5 million in financing provided by Audax Ventures, BioAsia Partners and STARTech Early Ventures.

“Our relationship with UT Southwestern is a win-win,” said Frank Gerome, partner of STARTech. “Our business development expertise and vast network of professionals will be important to the commercialization of Eliance. UT Southwestern solidifies STARTech Early Ventures’ initiative in the Dallas medical sector, which we firmly believe will see tremendous growth in coming years.”

Stone credited STARTech for its critical work in laying the groundwork for the technology partnership.

“STARTech Early Ventures was the essential catalyst in utilizing the infrastructure for biotechnology to make Eliance a reality for UT Southwestern,” he said.

Eliance’s president and chief scientific officer, Dr. Tom Turpen, formerly headed a research division of a California biotechnology company. Turpen has had 19 years of experience in biotechnology companies as an inventor, scientist and program director.

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