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UT Southwestern faculty receive honors

DALLAS – Dec. 28, 2010 – Faculty members from UT Southwestern Medical Center recently were recognized for achievements in their fields.

Dr. Carol Tamminga, chairman of the psychiatry department at UT Southwestern Medical Center, is one of 15 researchers worldwide to receive a 2010 Distinguished Investigator Award from the National Alliance for Research on Schizophrenia and Depression. The \$100,000 grant will support Dr. Tamminga's study of the entire range of chemicals that might be involved in glutamate activity in specific areas of the brain to get a better understanding of the pathophysiology of schizophrenia. The proposal of Dr. Tamminga, a member of NARSAD's Scientific Council, was one of 170 proposals submitted to NARSAD. The Distinguished Investigator program assists senior scientists who are on the threshold of a breakthrough or wish to pursue a novel research idea.

Dr. Zhijian "James" Chen, professor of molecular biology at UT Southwestern Medical Center, has been appointed to the George L. MacGregor Distinguished Chair in Biomedical Science. Dr. Chen's scientific investigations focus on cell signaling, especially in the immune system. He primarily studies a protein called ubiquitin, which tags proteins for routine breakdown but also activates a key step in the body's early immune response. Dr. Chen also discovered a mitochondrial protein, MAVS, which is essential for immune defense against viral infection.

Dr. Lora Hooper, associate professor of immunology and microbiology and director of the Immunology Graduate Program at UT Southwestern Medical Center, has been named holder of the J. Wayne Streilein, M.D., Professorship in Immunology. Her research centers on host-microbial interactions, including how microbes – especially the hundreds of species of bacteria in the human gut – help to shape the development and function of the immune system. Her work has applications in the search for novel ways to fight infections due to the growing number of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

Dr. Edward Livingston, who leads the division of gastrointestinal and endocrine surgery at UT Southwestern Medical Center, has been named chair of the graduate program in biomedical engineering at UT Southwestern, part of the UT Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. The program offers master and doctorate degrees in biomedical engineering through a collaborative agreement with UT Arlington and UT Dallas. The initial program between UT Arlington and UT Southwestern is one of the oldest bioengineering programs in the country, with UTD joining the effort last year. Thirteen interdisciplinary research teams of faculty from the three institutions have received grants totaling about \$1.3 million to pursue joint projects, with the goal of stimulating efforts at the interface between biology, chemistry, physics, engineering, computer science and mathematics. Dr. Livingston also has a secondary appointment as professor of bioengineering at UT Arlington.

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