

news THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT DALLAS

Southwestern medical school • graduate school of biomedical sciences • school of allied health sciences

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******UTHSCD gets \$2 million Ischemic
Heart Disease Center.*

DALLAS--A major new heart disease center will be established by The University of Texas Southwestern Medical School under grants from the National Heart and Lung Institute estimated to total more than \$2 million over a five-year period.

The "Ischemic Heart Disease Center" is one of eight designed by NHLI to attack the worst health problem in the United States.

"Ischemic heart disease is coronary artery disease--that process by which blood vessels narrow with deposits of fatty material including cholesterol and are unable to deliver an adequate supply of oxygen to the heart," explained Dr. James T. Willerson, associate professor of Internal Medicine at Southwestern who is the new center director.

"This disease," he continued, "is one of the major problems today in cardiology: There are 600,000 people a year who die of problems related to heart attacks after they reach the hospital. Fifty or sixty per cent of total patients never reach the hospital."

The Dallas center will mount a general, broad-based attack on all the factors involved in ischemic heart disease, he said.

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first add heart

"We'll study factors which are important in limiting the amount of damage which occurs when a person suffers a heart attack," Dr. Willerson said. "We'll also study factors important in regulating heart blood flow, metabolism and performance of hearts which have coronary artery disease."

The center will have designated space for patients with coronary artery disease or who have already had heart attacks.

"We want to provide, in an innovative way, new means of care for those persons--based on a better understanding of the disease process," said Dr. Willerson.

Research will be aimed at possible ways of forestalling attacks in those afflicted.

The grant will enable recruitment of a core of health professionals in both clinical and laboratory settings.

The Ischemic Heart Disease Center will be a significant extension of the large cardiopulmonary group at Southwestern Medical School. This group has produced extensive work on effects of exercise on heart function and a number of other areas of heart research.

"The center's work also will involve other members of Southwestern's Departments of Internal Medicine, Radiology, Biochemistry, Pathology, Physiology, Biochemistry, Surgery, Medical Computer Resources Center and others," Dr. Willerson said.

The Dallas medical school was one of eight chosen from a field of approximately 50 applicant institutions. Other centers include Massachusetts General Hospital, Johns Hopkins, University of Alabama, Duke University, Barnes Hospital in St. Louis, LaJolla and Chicago University.

second add heart

Dr. Willerson said an important aspect of work will be seeking new diagnostic approaches to recognizing heart attacks. These include new methods of "imaging" or obtaining pictures of heart damage, procedures which have been developed at Southwestern. Also, methods of measuring heart attack damage through immunology are being developed.

The Dallas center would be expected to serve a wide area of the Southwest.

Funding is expected at the rate of around \$500,000 per year for the five-year period. Amounts for years two through five remain negotiable.

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