

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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Colleagues, patients contribute \$250,000 to establish distinguished professorship at UT Southwestern in honor of former radiation oncology chair

DALLAS – Dec. 1, 2005 – Friends, colleagues, former students and patients of oncologist Dr. David Pistenmaa have raised \$250,000 to establish a distinguished professorship in his name at UT Southwestern Medical Center.

Dr. Pistenmaa, professor and former chairman of radiation oncology, is a highly regarded researcher and clinician who was an important force in the development of the Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center at UT Southwestern.

Dr. David Chen, chief of the molecular radiation biology division in the Department of Radiation Oncology, will be the first holder of the David A. Pistenmaa, M.D., Ph.D., Distinguished Professorship in Radiation Oncology.

“David Pistenmaa was instrumental in planning and organizing not only the Department of Radiation Oncology, but the cancer center as a whole. Much of the excellent oncology work being done at UT Southwestern today has grown from the foundation he laid more than a decade ago,” said Dr. John Minna, director of the Nancy B. and Jake L. Hamon Center for Therapeutic Oncology Research and the W.A. “Tex” and Deborah Moncrief Jr. Center for Cancer Genetics. “David truly is a leader in every way. On one hand, he is the ultimate clinician – knowledgeable, caring and calm. On the other hand, he has a great affinity for planning and organizing things in a systematic, simple manner. All of us who have been fortunate enough to know him are the better for it.”

Dr. Minna co-chaired the campaign to raise funds for the Pistenmaa Distinguished Professorship, along with Dr. Hak Choy, chairman of radiation oncology.

Dr. Pistenmaa served as chairman of radiation oncology at UT Southwestern from 1996 to 2003. In 1998 he was elected a fellow of the American College of Radiology.

Before joining UT Southwestern in 1992, he was director of the radiation research program at the National Cancer Institute and was chairman of radiation oncology at Fairfax Hospital in Falls Church, Va.

Dr. Pistenmaa earned his medical degree from Stanford University in 1969 and a doctorate in medical physics from the University of California in 1970. He also holds a Master of Science in

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nuclear engineering from the U.S. Air Force Institute of Technology and a Master of Science in bioradiology from the University of California, Berkeley.

“David Pistenmaa serves as a role model in all aspects of academic and clinical medicine,” said Dr. Kern Wildenthal, president of UT Southwestern. “Thanks to his able leadership, the medical center’s radiation cancer programs made extraordinary strides in a very few years. Everyone at UT Southwestern regards David as an exemplary colleague and as a genuinely nice person. The creation of this distinguished professorship is evidence of the affection and admiration which is felt for him, as well as a well-deserved recognition of his clinical and academic excellence.”

Dr. David Chen, professor of radiation oncology, is a nationally recognized researcher whose work focuses on DNA repair and radiation biology. He co-directs the NASA Specialized Center of Research at UT Southwestern, established with a \$9.8 million grant that allows researchers to study the effects of radiation on astronauts and minimize possible health risks from future space travel.

Before joining UT Southwestern in 2004, Dr. Chen was with the life sciences division of Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in Berkeley, Calif., where he served as senior staff scientist and group leader for the DNA Repair and Nuclear Organization Group in the Department of Molecular and Cell Biology. He received his master’s and doctorate degrees in biological sciences from the University of Missouri.

“It is my great honor to be appointed to a distinguished professorship named for Dr. Pistenmaa, who has devoted his whole career to radiation oncology research and clinical practice,” said Dr. Chen. “While modern biology continues to advance, the gap between basic research and its application to clinical practice still exists. Our department is committed to close interactions between researchers and clinicians to narrow this gap and to develop cutting-edge radiotherapeutic approaches for better cancer treatment. This new support will help us do that.”

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