

# SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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## **UT Southwestern dermatologists use antigen shots to alleviate warts without scarring**

DALLAS – July 14, 2005 – If burning and freezing warts hasn't worked, ask your dermatologist about getting a shot.

Traditional approaches usually involve methods like applying salicylic acid, burning, freezing, and surgically removing warts one by one, but some UT Southwestern Medical Center doctors now regularly use a different approach when others fail. It involves a shot into a wart, stimulating the body's own natural defense mechanism.

"Our bodies cannot immunologically recognize a wart that's there. If you stimulate the body's immune system locally, you bring in some activated immune cells that will then recognize the abnormal wart present," explained Dr. Jack Cohen, assistant professor of dermatology. "It's essentially using our own body's defense to take care of it."

The therapy can be as effective in many instances as some of the more common therapies, but it doesn't leave scarring, which can occur after burning off warts.

The most common shot used is called *Candida* antigen, derived from the common yeast that causes infections in women, and thrush, a mouth infection. Several other antigens can be used and the latest approaches involve combining antigens to better stimulate the body's response.

UT Southwestern researchers have also tested *Candida* antigen for treatment of basal cell cancer, the most common form of skin cancer. It produced better results than the placebo, but cure rates were not better than with traditional surgical therapies.

One down side of shots, Dr. Cohen said, is: "The injections can hurt in the common wart sites, such as the fingers and feet."

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