

NEWS

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
SOUTHWESTERN
MEDICAL SCHOOL AT DALLAS



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DALLAS--Overworked physicians, it's generally agreed, need help. What is not so clear is the types of professional assistants that could best be used to help ease the squeeze in physicians' workloads.

Administrators of the School of Allied Health Professions of The University of Texas Southwestern Medical School are seeking answers to this vital question in a year-long survey that will help shape the school's new physicians' assistants training program, due to get under way next year.

"We hope to determine by study who needs physicians' assistants in Texas," explains Dr. Harry J. Parker, SAHP associate dean. "Interest is high, but knowledge is lacking."

The survey is being funded by part of a \$79,502 private grant recently awarded the school to develop a two-year pilot program to educate doctors' assistants.

First year of the pilot effort will be devoted to planning, Dr. Parker said. Under the second year of the grant, training in one medical specialty area will begin, with first classes for some dozen students starting next summer.

Subsequent operations of the program will be funded by the State.

To conduct the groundwork research, John C. Delahunt has joined the health professions school as planner-analyst. Delahunt retired Sept. 1 after 29 years in health service administration for the United States Air Force. Recently he had been an administrator in the School of Health Care Sciences at Sheppard Air Force Base, Wichita Falls, Texas.

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first add physicians' assistants

Delahunt will interview physicians and collect data through questionnaires to gain a statistical profile of manpower requirements, Dr. Parker said.

From analysis of this data, school officials will select the specialty most in demand as subject for the initial training program. Other essential specialty areas will be added to the curriculum later.

Likely candidates for eventual study programs are such specialties as pediatrics, family practice, internal medicine, radiology and cardiopulmonary science. Training programs generally will require two years of academic and clinical study, leading to a B.S. degree in Health Care Sciences. Students will be accepted after completing two years of college-level work elsewhere.

Graduates will be qualified to assist physicians in many segments of medical practice, including the taking of medical histories, helping in diagnostic procedures and therapeutic treatment and coordinating work of other allied health personnel.

The preparatory surveys will touch all aspects of the health care picture, Dr. Parker said.

"We will be looking at rural versus urban needs, and the needs of primary health care facilities including big hospitals and little clinics," he said, with special attention paid to ways to help the badly overworked small-town practitioner.

"In general the survey is aimed at the physician and his own perception of what is needed to aid him in health care delivery," he said. "Studying these various settings will help us determine what type of manpower we should be graduating."

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