

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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UT SOUTHWESTERN AND M.D. ANDERSON JOIN FORCES TO COMBAT LUNG CANCER

DALLAS — Nov. 26, 1996 — Lung cancer researchers at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas and The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston will combine their expertise in a National Cancer Institute-funded grant that will develop new methods of lung cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

UT Southwestern and M.D. Anderson have received a joint \$4.5 million grant from the National Cancer Institute (NCI). The prestigious grant for Specialized Programs of Research Excellence (SPORE) will cover four integrated research areas as well as developmental projects and core support for three years.

The major research areas include identifying new tumor suppressor genes, studying a possible familial predisposition to lung cancer, developing new ways for the molecular detection of genetic damage in lungs from cigarette smoking and the treatment of former smokers with a new retinoid drug to prevent the development of lung cancer. Developmental areas build on those issues and include efforts ranging from studying the genetic aspects of nicotine addiction to developing new forms of therapy to attack tumor blood vessels.

This SPORE award is the first complete joint effort between two institutions since NCI began offering the grants five years ago. It is one of only three SPORE grants awarded in lung cancer.

Dr. John Minna, director of the Nancy B. and Jake L. Hamon Center for Therapeutic Oncology Research, is the principal investigator of the project. Dr. Jack A. Roth, chairman of the Department of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery at M.D. Anderson, is co-principal

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investigator.

"Jack Roth and I looked around the world and realized we had two of the best lung cancer research programs right here in Texas," Minna said. "We got the major investigators interested in lung cancer from UT Southwestern and M.D. Anderson together and saw the tremendous synergy of ideas, talent and energy. This led to the development of this SPORE grant that Texas should be proud of," he added.

"This award recognizes the stature of lung cancer research being accomplished at both M.D. Anderson and UT Southwestern," Roth said. "It also presents a unique opportunity for basic and clinical scientists to work together to take advantage more rapidly of new molecular research findings that can be applied to improved patient care."

Minna said the grant is highly competitive and "gives us a real opportunity to have a major impact on lung cancer research and treatment. Our major focus will be on very early lung cancer detection and prevention. While everyone's long-term goal is smoking cessation and the prevention of people starting to smoke, we are particularly interested in detecting and preventing the approximately 50,000 cases of lung cancer that occur in former smokers -- those people who have kicked the habit."

An estimated 158,000 deaths will result from lung cancer in 1996. Cigarette smoking is by far the most important cause of lung cancer. Treatment is difficult because symptoms often do not appear until the disease is advanced.

Roth pointed out that the SPORE grant also will fund smaller pilot projects to prompt new lung cancer research among young investigators. "We have new ideas that need development. This grant will plant the seeds for what may grow into major cancer research projects in the future."

The NCI SPORE grant program was specifically designed to encourage rapid translation of new and innovative research from the laboratory to the clinic in four high priority areas: breast, prostate, gastrointestinal and lung cancer.

Other UT Southwestern investigators involved in the SPORE grant include Dr. Adi Gazdar, professor of pathology and holder of the W. Ray Wallace Distinguished Chair in

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Molecular Oncology Research; Dr. Jerry Shay, professor of cell biology and neuroscience; Dr. Philip Thorpe, professor of pharmacology and holder of the Serena S. Simmons Distinguished Chair in Cancer Immunopharmacology; Dr. Gail Tomlinson, assistant professor of pediatrics; Dr. David Mangelsdorf, assistant professor of pharmacology and an investigator in the Howard Hughes Medical Institute at UT Southwestern; Dr. Mark Walberg, assistant professor of internal medicine; Dr. Denise Kavanaugh, assistant professor of internal medicine and Dr. Donald McIntire, assistant director of academic computing services.

Minna also directs the W.A. "Tex" and Deborah Moncrief Jr. Center for Cancer Genetics and holds the Sarah M. and Charles E. Seay Distinguished Chair in Cancer Research, the Lisa K. Simmons Distinguished Chair in Comprehensive Oncology and the Max L. Thomas Distinguished Chair in Molecular Pulmonary Oncology. Roth is chairman of the Department of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery and Professor of Tumor Biology at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. He holds the Bud Johnson Clinical Chair.

In addition to Roth, other M.D. Anderson investigators include Dr. Waun Ki Hong, chairman of thoracic/head and neck medical oncology; Dr. Margaret R. Spitz, professor, department of epidemiology; Dr. Walter N. Hittelman, professor of medicine, department of clinical investigation; Dr. Jonathan Kurie, assistant professor of medicine, department of thoracic/head and neck medical oncology; Dr. Reuben Lotan, professor, department of tumor biology; Dr. Ann M. Killary, associate professor, division of laboratory medicine; Dr. Bruce Mackay, emeritus professor of pathology; Dr. Li Mao, assistant professor of medicine, department of thoracic/head and neck medical oncology; Dr. Chris Amos, associate professor, department of epidemiology; Dr. Neely Atkinson, associate professor, department of biomathematics; Dr. Paul Cinciripini, associate professor, department of behavioral science; and Dr. Ellen Gritz, professor and chair, department of behavioral science.

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