

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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UT Southwestern awarded \$9.7 million for clinical research training

DALLAS – Oct. 5, 2005 – UT Southwestern Medical Center has received a highly competitive five-year, \$9.7 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to support the next generation of leaders in patient-oriented research.

“This grant represents formal recognition by the NIH of our clinical research initiative, particularly our focus on the career development of young faculty,” said Dr. Milton Packer, director of UT Southwestern’s Center for Biostatistics and Clinical Science and principal investigator on the grant.

UT Southwestern is one of five institutions nationwide to receive the Multidisciplinary Clinical Research Career Development Program grant this year. In 2004, seven institutions received similar NIH grants, which are designed to promote clinical investigation that will have a significant impact on improving health and preventing disease.

“Our goal is to create an environment where we can take people who have enormous energy, great ideas and the willingness to commit themselves to a career in clinical research and give them the support and tools they need to become independent, peer-review-funded clinical investigators,” said Dr. Packer.

The new grant will be used to continue and enhance UT Southwestern’s Clinical Scholars Program, initiated earlier this year by the Center for Biostatistics and Clinical Science. That program currently supports 12 investigators who commit 75 percent of their time to an intense three-year educational and training program to prepare for careers as independent clinical investigators. The program includes rigorous course work, an apprenticeship in an ongoing research project and the conduct of an independent research project, all leading to a master's degree in clinical science.

Fourteen individuals will be chosen early in 2006 to begin in July 2006 as the first class of clinical scholars supported by the new NIH grant. The scholars will be chosen not only from Southwestern Medical School, but also from Baylor College of Dentistry, Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Pharmacy and UT Austin School of Nursing.

“The goal is to attract individuals who are trained differently, with not only medical degrees but also doctoral degrees in pharmacy, nursing, law, engineering and dentistry, people who look at the world

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from different perspectives,” Dr. Packer said. “We’re looking to them to break down traditional ways of thinking and come up with innovative ways to carry out research. These scholars will contribute importantly to a growing core of young investigators who will become the next leaders of clinical science at UT Southwestern and elsewhere.”

Dr. Packer said the grant will strengthen UT Southwestern’s commitment to clinical research.

“This is an institutional achievement of substantial magnitude,” said Dr. Alfred Gilman, dean of UT Southwestern Medical School. “Getting this award is a fantastic recognition of what we have already accomplished and our expectations for the future.” Dr. Gilman directs the Cecil H. and Ida Green Comprehensive Center for Molecular, Computational and Systems Biology.

The grant is part of the NIH Roadmap for Medical Research, a series of initiatives aimed at accelerating both the pace of discovery of new knowledge in the prevention, detection, diagnosis and treatment of disease and the translation of those discoveries into applications that will improve the health of the nation.

The objective of the NIH’s Multidisciplinary Clinical Research Career Development Program is to enhance the career development and training of postdoctoral and junior faculty health professionals in multidisciplinary, team research settings for leadership roles in the design and oversight of future clinical investigation.

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