

# News

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## \*\*\*\* UT Southwestern Dedicates Simmons Arthritis Center

The new home for the Harold C. Simmons Arthritis Research Center at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas was dedicated Sept. 28. Financed by a \$2-million gift from Dallas investor and philanthropist Harold Simmons, the new quarters make the Simmons Arthritis Center one of the world's largest arthritis research facilities.

"Having a research facility of this caliber makes it easier for us to recruit other top researchers," said Peter Lipsky, M.D., the director of the Simmons Arthritis Center.

"It gives me a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction to participate in the growth of this facility," said Simmons during a brief dedication ceremony.

Simmons, an arthritis sufferer, noted that his gifts have resulted in the contribution of other funds and grants to the center. "As with any investment, I'm pleased to see the center grow. As for my return on this investment, I hope it will be a cure for arthritis and a better life for arthritis sufferers," he said.

On hand to celebrate the dedication were Betsey Brewster Case, Esq., chairman of the National Arthritis Foundation (the highest volunteer position in the organization); Brian Butcher, Ph.D., group

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vice president of research and Arthur I. Grayzel, M.D., senior vice president of medical affairs of the National Arthritis Foundation; and Steven J. Hausman, Ph.D., the deputy director of the extramural research program of the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, one of the U.S. National Institutes of Health.

Case, who is a partner in the law firm Thompson, Hine & Flory in Cleveland, Ohio, presented Simmons with a glass sculpture as an expression of appreciation for his contributions to arthritis research.

"UT Southwestern's research program in rheumatic diseases has a long and distinguished history, first under the direction of Dr. Morris Ziff (retired), and now under the leadership of Dr. Peter Lipsky, both of whom have been awarded NIH grants for a number of years," said Hausman. "Based on the expertise of its researchers, UT Southwestern is a worthy place to have the Simmons Arthritis Center to study other forms of arthritis. And we applaud the philanthropy of individuals like Mr. Simmons."

In 1982 Simmons pledged \$8 million over 10 years to support basic research into the causes of inflammatory arthritis, particularly the types affecting the spine: spondyloarthropathies. That gift enabled UT Southwestern to double the number of faculty members specializing in arthritis research, adding geneticists and molecular biologists to the existing base of immunologists and cell biologists.

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However, this expansion meant crowded laboratories for the researchers. So in 1987 Simmons donated \$2 million for the new laboratory space. That gift enabled the medical center to convert space on the eighth floor of one of the buildings on campus into a 10,000-square-foot research center with seven labs for the Center's eight scientists.

In 1988, he added \$12 million to his earlier commitment to arthritis research as part of a \$41 million donation to UT Southwestern, reported to be "the largest single private commitment in the history of Texas higher education and medical research."

Simmons' gifts also helped attract other funds for arthritis research. Grants for the Simmons Arthritis Center have been obtained from the National Arthritis Foundation, the North Texas Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation and the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases.

Scientists at the center are studying genetic causes of the spondyloarthropathies and the role of the immune system in their development. They are also working to develop therapies for arthritis sufferers.

In addition to Lipsky, Drs. Laurie Davis, Allan Duby, Thomas Geppert, Nancy Oppenheimer-Marks, Heather Stieglitz, Joel Taurog and Mary Wacholtz will conduct research at the facility. They will work closely with other researchers at the medical center, especially nutrition and diabetes researchers and scientists with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

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"Many of the things we're studying in arthritis research overlap at the basic science level with other areas, so any discoveries we make are likely to contribute to other research efforts, and vice versa," said Lipsky.

Lipsky said more than 2 million Americans are affected by the spondyloarthropathies, which include ankylosing spondylitis, Reiter's syndrome, psoriatic arthritis, enteropathic arthritis and reactive arthritis.

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Note: The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas comprises Southwestern Medical School, Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Southwestern Allied Health Sciences School.