

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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UT SOUTHWESTERN'S GENERAL CLINICAL RESEARCH CENTER RECEIVES \$22 MILLION GRANT FROM NIH

DALLAS – June 13, 2003 – The General Clinical Research Center (GCRC) at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas has received its sixth National Institutes of Health grant renewal – a projected \$22 million over the next five years.

“The GCRC, now in its 29th year of funding, provides an infrastructure to facilitate patient-oriented research,” said Dr. Khashayar Sakhaee, GCRC program director and chief of mineral metabolism. “Rather than direct financial support, the GCRC offers free-of-charge hospital beds and outpatient rooms, expert nursing, controlled diets, statistical and data management, some laboratory tests, and oversight in human subject protection for UT Southwestern faculty, residents and fellows.”

“This renewal of the GCRC grant is particularly noteworthy for young clinical investigators,” said Dr. Charles Y.C. Pak, assistant dean for clinical investigation and director of the Center for Mineral Metabolism and Clinical Research. “With GCRC resources, they can conduct meaningful research with limited funds while gaining valuable training.”

Dr. Pak was recruited to UT Southwestern to establish the GCRC and served as its first program director for nearly two decades, and, since 1989, as its principal investigator. He directs the Robert T. Hayes Center for Mineral Metabolism Research.

In December, Dr. Robert J. Alpern, dean of Southwestern Medical School, will take over as principal investigator.

“The GCRC is a major institutional resource for conducting clinical research,” said Dr. Alpern. “This resource is particularly important now in order for us to explore clinical implications of emerging laboratory findings.”

One of 78 such centers in the United States, the UT Southwestern GCRC comprises inpatient and outpatient centers where researchers work with patients participating in studies and clinical trials. Researchers from dermatology, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, pathology, pediatrics, psychiatry, and surgery, as well as in centers such as the Center for Human Nutrition, the Mary Nell and Ralph B. Rogers Magnetic Resonance Center, and the Eugene

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McDermott Center for Human Growth and Development access the GCRC's resources.

Those resources include a bionutrition core with metabolic kitchen and full-time research dietitian; a staff of expert nurses skilled in maintaining strict protocol, essential for patient-oriented research; a core laboratory providing routine urine and serum chemistries; an informatics core providing graphic needs and programming support; a biostatistical core providing services such as study design, statistical analysis and manuscript preparation; and a human subjects protection core providing training and oversight in human subjects protection issues.

"The GCRC is of tremendous importance for clinical investigators in that it provides a unique environment for all the support needed in carrying on patient-oriented research," said Dr. Nicola Abate, assistant professor of internal medicine who has utilized the GCRC as holder of an NIH National Center for Research Resources Mentored Patient-Oriented Research Career Development Award.

"Besides the necessary infrastructures to admit patients in studies, young investigators have an opportunity to interact with expert research nurses, dietitians, data analysts and statisticians. Because research from a variety of investigators is conducted in the GCRC, the opportunity to discuss research progress and results with other investigators is the ideal ground to critically analyze data from different perspectives and improve study designs," Dr. Abate said.

An 11-bed inpatient unit is located in Parkland Memorial Hospital, which the GCRC leases with NIH funds. The outpatient center, with three examination rooms, is on the sixth floor of UT Southwestern's Charles Cameron Sprague Clinical Science Building.

Other primary investigators at the GCRC include Dr. Abhimanyu Garg, GCRC associate program director and professor of internal medicine; Dr. Dana S. Hardin, GCRC assistant program director, associate professor of pediatrics and internal medicine; Dr. Bryon H. Adinoff, professor of psychiatry; Dr. Scott M. Grundy, director of the Center for Human Nutrition and chairman of clinical nutrition; and Dr. Ronald G. Victor, chief of hypertension.

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