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**UT Southwestern biochemist wins \$1 million research prize
for cell death, cancer insights**

DALLAS – June 21, 2006 – Dr. Xiaodong Wang, a professor of biochemistry at UT Southwestern Medical Center who discovered mechanisms responsible for cell death, today was awarded the \$1 million Shaw Prize in Life Science and Medicine.

Dr. Wang, 43, will receive the international award from the Hong Kong-based Shaw Prize Foundation “for his discovery of the biochemical basis of programmed cell death, a vital process that balances cell birth and defends against cancer,” according to the award citation.

The Shaw Prize currently consists of three annual awards: the Prize in Astronomy, the Prize in Life Science and Medicine, and the Prize in Mathematical Sciences. The 2006 prizes will be presented to recipients in September at a ceremony in Hong Kong.

The prizes, first awarded in 2004 and sometimes referred to as the “Nobel Prize of the East,” honor individuals who have achieved significant breakthroughs in academic and scientific research or application, and whose work has resulted in a positive and profound impact on mankind.

Dr. Wang, a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator at UT Southwestern and one of the most cited scientists of the last decade, has made groundbreaking discoveries in the biochemistry of programmed cell death, or apoptosis. His findings have provided new directions for the treatment of cancer, where natural cell death is prevented and cancer cells grow unchecked.

“I was very surprised and happy to learn I had won the Shaw Prize,” Dr. Wang said. “UT Southwestern has everything to do with winning this award. The research environment here, my mentors and especially my outstanding postdoctoral students – they have as much to do with winning this honor as I do.”

The Shaw Prizes were established under the auspices of Sir Run Run Shaw, a Hong Kong film producer and chairman of Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB), the largest Chinese program producer in the world. The Shaw Prize is accompanied by a medal displaying a portrait of Sir Run Run Shaw and the imprint of a Chinese phrase that translates as “Grasp the law of nature and make use of it.”

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“This is an extraordinary, distinguished prize,” said Dr. Steven McKnight, chairman of biochemistry at UT Southwestern. “Xiaodong Wang is a genuine scientific pioneer who has used hard-core biochemistry to resolve the pathway controlling programmed cell death, a process that is liberally relevant to human disease, especially cancer.”

Dr. Michael Brown, Nobel laureate and director of the Erik Jonsson Center for Research in Molecular Genetics and Human Disease at UT Southwestern, said Dr. Wang was selected from among the most outstanding scientists from many countries.

“Dr. Wang was chosen because his work not only exposed a fundamental process in all animals, but also because it provides new directions for the treatment of cancer,” Dr. Brown said. “He figured out the balance between cells that are born and cells that die. That balance is key – if too few cells are destroyed, you get cancer; if too many, you age. Dr. Wang’s work has provided a key insight into how that balance is maintained.”

Dr. Kern Wildenthal, president of UT Southwestern, said the Shaw Prize verifies Dr. Wang’s place at the pinnacle of international biomedical scientists.

“This honor recognizes Dr. Wang’s status as one of the world’s top researchers,” Dr. Wildenthal said. “It also highlights UT Southwestern’s continuing success in attracting and nurturing many of the rising stars in biomedical science.”

Dr. Wang’s research centers on the biochemistry of cell death, a phenomenon in which cells activate a self-destruction program. As the body generates new cells, older cells undergo programmed cell suicide. In the case of cancer cells, they are unable to carry out the self-destruct program, so they grow uncontrollably.

Dr. Wang has discovered several proteins that play a key role in apoptosis, including cytochrome c. This protein was long known as an essential component for generating energy in the cell and maintaining life, but Dr. Wang showed that it also is active in triggering apoptosis.

His continuing research could lead not only to treatments for cancer but also to therapies targeting the abnormal cells in neurological diseases, such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s.

Originally from China, Dr. Wang received his undergraduate degree from Beijing Normal

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University before moving to the United States to pursue graduate studies at UT Southwestern, where he earned a doctorate in biochemistry in 1991. His postdoctoral research at UT Southwestern was with Dr. Brown and fellow Nobel laureate Dr. Joseph Goldstein, chairman of molecular genetics.

“His experiments as a postdoc with us helped determine the course of our lab over the past 12 years,” Dr. Brown said.

In 1995 Dr. Wang established his own laboratory as an assistant professor at Emory School of Medicine in Atlanta. In 1996 he returned to UT Southwestern and now holds the George L. MacGregor Distinguished Chair in Biomedical Science.

Dr. Wang is a member of the National Academy of Sciences and received that organization’s Award in Molecular Biology in 2004. Among his many honors, he has received the Hackerman Award in Chemical Research from the Welch Foundation, the Paul Marks Prize from the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, the Eli Lilly Award from the American Chemical Society, the Schering-Plough Award from the American Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, and the Young Investigator Award from the Society of Chinese Biomedical Scientists in America.

The 2006 Shaw Prize in Mathematics will go jointly to David Mumford of Brown University and Wu Wentsun of the Chinese Academy of Sciences at Beijing, while the Prize in Astronomy will be awarded jointly to Saul Perlmutter of the University of California’s Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory, Adam Riess of the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore, and Brian Schmidt of the Mount Stromlo Observatory at the Australian National University in Canberra.

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