

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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DALLAS NEUROBIOLOGIST NAMED TO SPINAL-CORD INJURY CONSORTIUM

DALLAS — June 30, 1995 — Dr. Luis F. Parada, director of the Center for Developmental Biology at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, has been named to a consortium of eight of the world's leading neuroscientists. They will collaborate on research that ultimately could lead to repair of injured spinal cords and recovery from paralysis.

Sponsored by the American Paralysis Association (APA) in cooperation with the Kent Waldrep National Paralysis Foundation, the consortium will pool the expertise of each neuroscientist's research team.

"This consortium is needed to provide a stimulus and focus for paralysis research," said Waldrep, founder of both the National Paralysis Foundation and the APA. "Hopefully the consortium will provide the catalyst for research leading to more effective treatments and, eventually, a cure."

Waldrep's Dallas-based foundation, of which he is president, raises funds through its annual Southwestern Ball to support neuroscience research at UT Southwestern.

"We are especially pleased that Dr. Parada and the team that we've helped establish at UT Southwestern will play an important role in this consortium," Waldrep said. "We are going to take the lead in finding additional funding to support their research efforts on behalf of the consortium."

The APA has made a three-year commitment to the consortium, with first-year funding totaling \$700,000, which will be shared by the eight neuroscientists.

Recent advances in the fields of neurobiology and clinical neurology led to the idea of the consortium, Parada said. "At the cellular level, we've learned a lot about nerve growth or survival factors and their receptors," he explained. "These molecules have diverse neural

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functions, but this information has not been consolidated in relation to spinal cord biology and injury."

Parada's own research will focus on discovering where and when the molecules that control nerve growth and survival are found in a normal spinal cord. "Then we will examine how they are affected by acute and chronic injury," he said.

Parada hopes the work of the consortium will allow the scientists to construct a fundamental picture of what goes on at the molecular level in the spinal cord before and after injury. "This is information that would be extremely useful to all those studying spinal cord injury," he said.

"We may find some surprises, but at the very least, this will allow us to consolidate and refine our understanding of spinal-cord biology, with the ultimate goal of developing effective new therapies," he said.

The APA, headquartered in Springfield, N.J., was formed in 1982 to encourage and support research to find a cure for paralysis caused by spinal cord injury and other central nervous system disorders. The National Paralysis Foundation was founded in 1985 by Waldrep, a former Texas Christian University football player who has been paralyzed since his neck was broken during a football game in 1974. Its mission is to facilitate a cure for paralysis caused by injury to the spinal cord and/or brain. Proceeds from the foundation's annual Southwestern Ball help support UT Southwestern's Kent Waldrep Foundation Center for Basic Neuroscience Research.

Other members of the APA Consortium on Spinal Cord Injury include Dr. Ira B. Black, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School; Dr. Richard P. Bunge, The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis; Dr. Dennis W. Choi, Washington University Medical Center in St. Louis; Dr. Carl W. Cotman, University of California, Irvine, Medical Center; Dr. Fred H. Gage, The Salk Institute; Dr. Martin E. Schwab, University of Zurich, Switzerland; and Dr. Wise Young, New York University Medical Center.

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