

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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\$3 MILLION FEDERAL GRANT HELPING SCIENTISTS PURSUE ACCELERATED VACCINE DEVELOPMENT

DALLAS – Feb. 4, 2002 – With U.S. troops overseas in the war on terrorism and last fall's anthrax outbreak killing five people on the East Coast, UT Southwestern Medical Center scientists are trying to determine if vaccine development can be accelerated and super vaccines protecting against multiple diseases can be created. The work is being financed by a \$3 million grant from the Department of Defense.

"Instead of the many years, even a decade or longer, now required to develop a vaccine, we hope to reduce the research and development time to months, or possibly less," said Dr. Stephen A. Johnston, principal investigator of the research and director of UT Southwestern's Center for Biomedical Inventions.

The three-year grant, received last year from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), totals \$2,997,353 and focuses on some promising aspects of earlier antibiological warfare work, including 1997 genetic immunization studies led by Johnston and funded by DARPA.

"The latest grant is supporting three projects pursuing new, faster and more effective biotech methods for developing multiple vaccines in response to the often-changing threats of biological warfare," Johnston said.

His longtime collaborator, Dr. Rick Lyons of the University of New Mexico, will conduct animal tests to confirm the feasibility of the new technologies coming from the laboratory. The study is initially seeking to generate vaccines against anthrax, plague and tularemia.

"These three bacterial pathogens are considered among the likely weapons of choice among bioterrorists, but the new vaccine technologies could work for any pathogen threat," said Johnston.

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