

# SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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## OLSON TO HEAD HAMON CENTER IN BASIC CANCER RESEARCH

DALLAS — November 20, 1995 — Molecular biologist Dr. Eric N. Olson of Houston will join the faculty of UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas next month to direct the new Nancy B. and Jake L. Hamon Center for Basic Research in Cancer.

Olson, who will hold the Nancy B. and Jake L. Hamon Distinguished Chair in Basic Cancer Research, presently is the Robert A. Welch Professor in Chemistry and chairman of biochemistry and molecular biology at UT M. D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. He also is on the faculty of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at UT Health Science Center at Houston.

Olson is internationally recognized for his research in the genetic mechanisms of skeletal, cardiac, and smooth-muscle cell proliferation and differentiation.

"Studying muscle cells as a model system gives us a general understanding of the mechanisms for normal cell growth and its disruption in many types of cancer cells," Olson said.

In his research, Olson has revealed transcription factors that control muscle cell proliferation and differentiation. In rhabdomyosarcoma, a type of cancer appearing in the skeletal muscles of children, these factors are unable to function, possibly resulting in uncontrolled cell growth.

Olson completed his doctorate in biochemistry at the Bowman Gray School of Medicine of Wake Forest University in North Carolina. He serves on review and advisory committees for a number of organizations, including the National Cancer Institute, the American Heart Association, the Muscular Dystrophy Association and the National Institutes

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of Health. He is editor-in-chief of the journal *Developmental Biology*, and is on the editorial boards of many major publications including *Circulation*, *Molecular and Cellular Biology*, and the *Journal of Cell Biology*.

As director of the Hamon Center for Basic Research in Cancer, Olson hopes to "assemble a group of interactive scientists working on different aspects of cancer biology who will contribute to a greater understanding of the molecular genetics of cell growth and its disruption in cancer cells."

Dr. William Neaves, dean of Southwestern Medical School, said bringing Olson to Dallas is an important step in the development of UT Southwestern's cancer program.

"Dr. Olson has shown how gene expression is controlled during normal development," Neaves said. "Nothing is more fundamental to cancer biology than the switching on and off of genes regulating cell division. Because of the insight emerging from his research and the international recognition he has earned, Eric Olson is superbly qualified to lead the Hamon Center for Basic Research in Cancer."

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