

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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DR. MICHAEL PRIEBE TO HEAD KIMBERLY-CLARK CENTER FOR PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION RESEARCH

DALLAS — September 16, 1997 — Dr. Michael Priebe has been named director of the Kimberly-Clark Center for Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Research.

Priebe, an associate professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at UT Southwestern, joined the faculty in April. His specialty is neurological trauma, especially spinal cord injury.

Established in 1993, the center is dedicated to discovering improved procedures for rehabilitating patients with mobility impairments and restoring them to productive lives.

"My special desire is to build a bridge between the basic sciences and the clinical sciences in the area of spinal cord injury (SCI) research here at UT Southwestern," Priebe said. "This medical center already has an outstanding neurotrauma program and basic scientists working to unlock the secrets of spinal-cord regeneration. The piece I bring to the research effort through the Kimberly-Clark Center is a clinical expertise in SCI rehabilitation and experience with a neurophysiological assessment tool to quantitatively document the motor control of humans with spinal cord injury."

Priebe's research focuses on spasticity and the quantitative assessment of abnormal motor control. A grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Rehabilitation Research and Development Service is funding his studies on the effects of medications on specific aspects of spasticity. He is chief of the Spinal Cord Injury Service for the VA North Texas Health Care System.

"By understanding the altered motor control often seen after spinal cord injury and the effects different medications have on it, we hope to identify better ways to improve control of partially paralyzed muscles and ultimately find the key to restoring functional movement," he said.

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In most injuries, the spinal cord is not completely severed. Even in people with clinically complete SCI --- no movement or feeling below the level of injury --- evidence of preserved motor control often can be detected. These people may be candidates for interventions to improve conduction of nerve signals through the spinal-cord scar or for regeneration therapies that are on the horizon.

Priebe said research efforts in spinal cord injury are often divided between "care" and "cure" --- one camp concerned primarily with rehabilitation and support, the other camp focused on research efforts.

"I don't think the two are mutually exclusive," he said. "We can work in the here and now --- helping people live quality lives --- but we can also work in whatever niche we can toward a cure. We do a pretty good job in the area of care, we need to work harder in the area of cure."

A graduate of the University of Utah School of Medicine, Priebe trained at the University of Michigan Hospitals. He was with Baylor College of Medicine for six years and served as assistant chief of the spinal cord injury service at the Houston VA Medical Center. He was listed in the 1996 edition of the *Best Doctors in America: Central Region*.

He serves on several national committees of the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and is active in the American Spinal Injury Association, the American Paraplegia Society and the International Medical Society of Paraplegia.

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