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\$250,000 gift from grateful celiac patient establishes Lancaster Family Fund in Gastroenterology

DALLAS – Sept. 23, 2010 – For more than five years, Jerry Lancaster battled a mysterious disease that had left him gravely ill. Though weakened by relentless symptoms and frustrated by the numerous area doctors unable to correctly diagnose his ailment, the Plano businessman was undeterred.

Mr. Lancaster eventually was referred to UT Southwestern Medical Center, where a young physician, Dr. Jeffrey Browning, uncovered the culprit behind the patient's elusive symptoms. He had celiac disease, an inherited autoimmune disease.

Celiac disease, which affects as many as 3 million people in the U.S., damages the small intestine and interferes with absorption of nutrients from food. There are no signs or symptoms typical for everyone, so medical experts estimate as many as 97 percent of those with the condition have not been diagnosed correctly.

Generally, the most common symptom is gastric distress, which can include diarrhea, abdominal pain and bloating. People who have the disease cannot tolerate gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. Celiac disease is so challenging because its symptoms can also mimic symptoms of other conditions, including anemia, Crohn's disease, gastric ulcers, irritable bowel conditions and parasitic infections.

"It took Dr. Browning about two weeks to diagnose what had taken all the other doctors years to miss, and I'll forever be grateful," said Mr. Lancaster, a retired insurance investor. "He, quite literally, took me from the brink of death. I feel immensely fortunate to have landed at UT Southwestern when I did."

That gratitude now has translated into a \$250,000 gift from Mr. Lancaster and his wife, Beverly. The gift will create the Lancaster Family Fund in Gastroenterology at the medical center, which will foster the work of junior faculty members and support gastroenterology research and clinical care. The fund will be administered by Dr. Browning, assistant professor of internal medicine.

"My wife and I think so highly of the medical center and its superior staff," said Mr. Lancaster. "We recognize firsthand the importance of excellent medical care, and are pleased to be able to show our appreciation to UT Southwestern, while supporting the work of talented young doctors like Jeffrey Browning."

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The Lancasters, natives of Gladewater, married in 1955. Mrs. Lancaster attended Kilgore Junior College. Mr. Lancaster earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Southern Methodist University in 1960, while his wife worked to pay his tuition.

The couple is active in a variety of civic and charitable organizations in Collin and Dallas counties, including The Arts of Collin County, Star Children's Charity, Crystal Charity Ball, Northwood Woman's Club and CONTACT Crisis Line. They have three grown sons, 10 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

"We are extremely honored that the Lancasters have chosen to recognize Dr. Browning and our medical center's other young physicians in such a significant way," said Dr. Daniel K. Podolsky, president of UT Southwestern. "It is an exceptionally generous gift that was inspired by a painful, but ultimately hopeful, journey. Jerry and Beverly's support will enable gastroenterology to assume a still-greater prominence in our programs."

Dr. Browning earned a medical degree with honors from UT Southwestern in 1998 after graduating with a degree in biochemistry from UT Austin in 1994. Following an internship and residency at the University of Alabama in Birmingham, Dr. Browning returned to UT Southwestern in 2001 to complete fellowships in hepatology and clinical gastroenterology.

In 2003 the National Institutes of Health awarded him a training fellowship, which Dr. Browning completed in 2005. A UT Southwestern faculty member since 2004, Dr. Browning has received numerous awards and honors, including being appointed a Disease-Oriented Clinical Scholar at UT Southwestern from 2006-2009.

"I have told Jerry many times that it has been my honor to diagnose and treat him," said Dr. Browning. "He and his wife are very generous people who, at the same time, are quite humble. The division of digestive and liver diseases and I are very grateful for the Lancasters' gift, as it will facilitate the accrual of the next generation of academic gastroenterologists at UT Southwestern."

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