

Media Contact: Connie Piloto
214-648-3404
connie.piloto@utsouthwestern.edu

UT Southwestern researcher named Howard Hughes Medical Institute Early Career Physician-Scientist

DALLAS – July 7, 2009 – Dr. Nima Sharifi, assistant professor of internal medicine at UT Southwestern Medical Center, has received a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Early Career Physician-Scientist Award.

He is one of 11 researchers named in a national competition by the institute to be part of the program, which is aimed at increasing the number of researchers who translate basic science discoveries into improved treatment for patients. Established in 2006, the program supports a total of 52 physician-scientists.

Each Early Career Physician-Scientist receives \$375,000 in research funding over a five-year period from HHMI. The funds, which do not support the awardees' salaries, often are used to hire lab personnel or purchase vital research equipment, according to the institute.

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute, a nonprofit medical research organization that ranks as one of the nation's largest philanthropies, has in the past two decades invested more than \$8.3 billion for the support, training and education of the nation's most creative and promising scientists.

"Translating basic science into patient care is a cornerstone of UT Southwestern's mission as an academic medical center," said Dr. Daniel K. Podolsky, president of UT Southwestern. "The HHMI's generous support of Dr. Sharifi at a critical time in his career helps ensure the ability to deliver on that commitment, and we are grateful for the institute's recognition of the value of his work."

Dr. Sharifi's research focuses on how advanced prostate cancer – the second leading cause of cancer death in men – becomes resistant to androgen deprivation therapy. The most well-known androgen is the male sex hormone testosterone.

Although prostate cancer initially responds to androgen withdrawal, these tumors eventually become resistant. Dr. Sharifi's laboratory focuses on genes that determine how this resistant state occurs. The hope is that this work eventually will help in the development of new therapies.

"This funding will allow my laboratory to look at this problem further in depth," Dr. Sharifi said. "I am truly honored to receive this award and support from HHMI."

Dr. Sharifi earned his medical degree from the University of Pittsburgh and was a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Fellow at the Cleveland Clinic. He completed his internal medicine residency at Yale-New Haven Hospital. Before becoming a faculty member in

(MORE)

Early Career Physician-Scientist – 2

hematology/oncology division of UT Southwestern's Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center in 2008, he served as a clinical associate and as an assistant clinical investigator at the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Md.

In addition to Dr. Sharifi's Early Career Physician-Scientist Award, Dr. Russell DeBose-Boyd, associate professor of molecular genetics, was appointed an HHMI Early Career Scientist in March. Also, 13 UT Southwestern faculty members hold appointments as HHMI investigators. They are Dr. Zhijian "James" Chen, professor of molecular biology; Dr. Johann Deisenhofer, professor of biochemistry; Dr. Nick Grishin, associate professor of biochemistry; Dr. Helen Hobbs, director of the Eugene McDermott Center for Human Growth and Development and chief of clinical genetics; Dr. Lora Hooper, assistant professor of immunology; Dr. Youxing Jiang, associate professor of physiology; Dr. Beth Levine, chief of infectious diseases; Dr. David Mangelsdorf, chairman of pharmacology; Dr. Michael Rosen, professor of biochemistry; Dr. Joseph Takahashi, chairman of neuroscience; Dr. Xiaodong Wang, professor of biochemistry; Dr. Masashi Yanagisawa, professor of molecular genetics; and Dr. Hongtao Yu, professor of pharmacology.

###

This news release is available on our World Wide Web home page at
<http://www.utsouthwestern.edu/home/news/index.html>

To automatically receive news releases from UT Southwestern via e-mail,
subscribe at www.utsouthwestern.edu/receivenews