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HEALTHY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR FAMILY DEPRESSION STUDIES

DALLAS--Sometimes medical scientists need help from the healthy to learn how to help the sick.

Psychiatry researchers at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas are looking for healthy volunteers who may be able to help them better understand how depression runs in families. They say if they can find out just what goes wrong in a chronically depressed person's brain, it may be possible to detect symptoms earlier and to develop new treatments.

"If we can learn to predict who may become severely depressed before they fall victim to depression, then down the line there's a chance that we can prevent depression," said Dr. A. John Rush, professor of psychiatry and holder of the Betty Jo Hay Distinguished Chair in Mental Health. Rush directs the Mental Health Clinical Research Center at UT Southwestern, a federally funded research center for mood disorders.

Rush and his colleagues need people who live in the Dallas-Fort Worth area to participate in a study looking for irregular brain-wave patterns during sleep. They are looking for abnormal patterns that might be a "marker"--a sign of vulnerability--for depression. Men and women ages 14 to 30 who have never been treated for depression but have at least one blood relative who has been treated for recurrent major depression or bipolar disorder (manic depression) are

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needed to help unravel the puzzle. The relatives treated for depression or manic depression may be parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, or aunts or uncles.

Volunteers will be interviewed confidentially, on the telephone first and then in person. Those who participate in the study also will spend one night in UT Southwestern's sleep-research lab.

A small fee will be paid to participants. "However, the real payoff will be knowing that they can make a contribution to research in depression that may affect people everywhere, as well as their own relatives," Rush said.

For more information about the study contact Dave Dunnam at (214) 688-8003.

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NOTE: The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas comprises Southwestern Medical School, Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, Southwestern Allied Health Sciences School, affiliated teaching hospitals and outpatient clinics.