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PUBLIC FORUM TO FOCUS ON HEART-DISEASE PREVENTION

DALLAS – February 24, 1998 – History doesn't record who first said: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." But the wisdom endures. Prevention will be the subject of Southwestern Medical Foundation's annual public forum titled "How to Prevent Your Heart Attack," scheduled for March 12 at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas.

The forum will begin at 7 p.m. in the Tom and Lula Gooch Auditorium on the medical center's South Campus. It will focus on four issues central to the maintenance of a healthy heart — obesity, exercise, high-blood pressure and antioxidants. Five UT Southwestern faculty members will give short presentations before taking questions from the audience.

"We are trying to prevent disease instead of taking care of people in the terminal phases of disease — which is what most of medicine has been concerned with," said Dr. Norman Kaplan, professor of internal medicine and author of the book "Prevent Your Heart Attack."

Besides saving individuals from suffering and disability, preventive medicine also saves society the high costs of treating the consequences of unhealthy lifestyles, Kaplan said. "More than half of heart diseases — the most common cause of death and disability — can be prevented."

The medical complications of obesity are well-established, including coronary-artery disease. While the debate rages about the safety of weight-loss drugs and fad diets, the simplest solution is to avoid obesity in the first place.

Dr. Margo Denke, associate professor of internal medicine, will address this issue. Denke, a nutrition scholar in the Center for Human Nutrition at UT Southwestern, has served on nutrition committees of the American Heart Association and the second National Cholesterol Education Adult Treatment Panel.

A recent report by the surgeon general concluded that regular exercise reduces the risk of

(MORE)

FORUM — 2

developing coronary-heart disease, enhances mental health and fosters healthy muscles and bones.

Dr. Jere Mitchell, professor of internal medicine and physiology, and Dr. Peter Snell, assistant professor of internal medicine, will discuss the role of exercise in preventive medicine. Snell, a three-time Olympic gold medalist in track, is director of a joint project with the Cooper Institute for Aerobics that is examining how to motivate people to exercise. Mitchell, holder of the S. Roger and Carolyn P. Horchow Chair in Cardiac Research, in Honor of Jere H. Mitchell, M.D., and the Frank M. Ryburn Jr. Chair in Heart Research, directs the Harry S. Moss Heart Center and the Pauline and Adolph Weinberger Laboratories for Cardiopulmonary Research.

Kaplan will address hypertension, which is often called the silent killer because there are no visible symptoms. Hypertension, or high-blood pressure, is one of the most common and most important risk factors for heart disease.

An international authority on the subject, Kaplan has served on the third, fourth, fifth and sixth Joint National Committees on Detection, Evaluation and Treatment of High Blood Pressure.

In recent years, science has begun to understand the damage that can be done to the body by free radicals. A group of vitamins called antioxidants may offer the best hope in preventing heart disease, cancer and in slowing the aging process.

Dr. Ishwarlal Jialal, professor of internal medicine, pathology and clinical nutrition, will explain the role of antioxidants — especially vitamin E — in preventing heart disease.

Jialal has done extensive research on antioxidants and was honored last year with an award from the Vitamin E Research & Information Service (VERIS) for furthering understanding of the importance of antioxidant supplements in human nutrition.

"These are all practical issues that the public should be aware of," Kaplan said. "We want to bring them up-to-date with the latest information on these topics."

For more information on the forum, please call (214) 648-3599.

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