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NEWS

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas
5323 Harry Hines Boulevard Dallas, Texas 75235 (214) 688-3404

CONTACT: Ric Spiegel
Office: 214/688-3404
Home: 214/528-7922

*****September seminar to focus on child and adolescent "developmentally disabled."

DALLAS--Most of us are healthy. Although we may occasionally stop to think about the handicapped--those who suffer from either a birth defect or a disabling accident--we usually spend each day secure in our good health. But for millions with physical and mental handicaps, life is not so secure. For the young, especially, facing life with a physical impairment can heap seemingly insurmountable problems upon already painful circumstances. How to deal with "developmental disabilities" of adolescents is the broad subject of a seminar to be held at the Adolphus Hotel, Sept. 11-14.

Organized by the University Affiliated Center (UAC), part of the Department of Pediatrics at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas, the seminar is attracting participants from a four-state area. More than 200 health professionals from a variety of medical disciplines will gather to discuss and share information regarding the many problems of the handicapped adolescent.

"It's not as simple as training a child to walk on crutches or explaining to the parents how to administer a medication," says Dr. Judith Samson, director of Psychology at the UAC and one of the speakers at the upcoming seminar. "The adolescent who has a developmental disability is plagued by problems which are routine activities for most of us. The range of problems is endless: social and sexual adjustment, attitudes toward work and school, transportation, money earning, reliability and punctuality, personal appearance...any area of adjustment is our concern."

Not only must the child in question be educated, but the parents or other caretakers as well have to learn a new set of guidelines and methods. Often, as in the case of a simple learning disability, parents must learn to identify their child's weakness and offer patience accordingly. In other cases of serious physical impairment, psychological problems might arise, calling for special counseling of both parent and child. The UAC is set up to help with limited counseling as well as referrals. The primary service, however, is diagnostic evaluation by a team of health care specialists. (Specialists in the UAC are on the faculty of Southwestern Medical School and eight other area universities.)

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The four-day seminar will feature three keynote speakers, each an important contributor to the field of adolescent developmental problems and medicine. Dr. Adele Hofmann is currently director of the Adolescent Medical Unit, Department of Pediatrics, New York University Medical Center. Winifred Kempton, MSS, ACSW, is director of education for Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania. She is known for her expertise in sex education, counseling, family planning and parenting. Dr. Sol Gordon is a well-known author, public speaker and educator. He is also professor of Child and Family Studies and director of the Institute for Family Research and Education at Syracuse University.

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