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****Dr. Mary-Jane Gething named associate dean of
Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical
Sciences

DALLAS -- Dr. Mary-Jane Gething is the new associate dean of Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas. Her appointment was announced by SGS Dean William Neaves.

Gething is an investigator of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute on the UTHSCD campus, an associate professor in the Department of Biochemistry and a principal scientist of the American Heart Association-Bugher Center for Molecular Biology in the Cardiovascular System.

"The first essential characteristic of the associate dean is to be an excellent role model for graduate students," says Neaves. "He or she has to be an active laboratory investigator with a first-rate, competitive research program and has to be able to serve as an exemplary mentor and teacher of graduate students. And that Dr. Gething does superbly. She is an example of what graduate students can aspire to in their careers."

Gething's scientific career began at the University of Melbourne in Australia where she received her bachelor's honors degree and Ph.D. in biochemistry. In 1973, a postdoctoral fellowship took her several continents away, to the Medical Research Council Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge, England. After two years of research in the MRC laboratory on the molecular aspects of enzyme evolution, she moved to London and the Imperial Cancer Research Fund at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1975.

In London Gething's research began to focus on membrane proteins and their mechanisms: first the membrane glycoproteins of Sendai virus and then the hemagglutinin glycoprotein of influenza virus (HA).

Gething was working in London on the protein chemistry of HA when she attended a seminar conducted by a postdoctoral fellow from Dr. Joseph Sambrook's laboratory at Cold Spring Harbor in New York. Sambrook's group was in England to carry out a cloning experiment. "I realized that recombining DNA and cloning provided a much faster way to find out what I wanted to know about HA than the protein chemistry work I was doing," she says.

So Gething and Sambrook joined efforts to clone the RNA gene and analyze the DNA sequence of hemagglutinin. Working on a NATO collaborative grant kept them commuting across the Atlantic until she accepted a position as a senior staff investigator at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in 1982.

(More)

In Cold Spring Harbor she and Sambrook continued their scientific collaboration, using the influenza hemagglutinin as a model system to understand membrane protein synthesis and its movement to the cell's surface.

In 1985 Gething became the first investigator appointed to the Howard Hughes Medical Institute on the UTHSCD campus, and Sambrook became chairman of the Department of Biochemistry at UT Southwestern Medical School. The two are continuing their pioneering research, focusing on the structure and function of normal cell proteins, such as tissue plasminogen activator, as well as viral proteins like HA. The research is carrying them into the field of protein folding.

As associate dean, Gething will approve all admissions to the graduate school as well as help in the recruiting effort. As for Gething's primary commitment to the Hughes Institute, Neaves believes it is a major plus for the graduate school. "Dr. Gething is a natural bridge between the Hughes Institute and the graduate school. New faculty members being recruited for the institute want the assurance that top quality graduate students will be available to work in their labs -- not because they need extra hands working in the lab but rather because bright young graduate students have new ideas that help the progress of the research program."

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Note: The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas comprises Southwestern Medical School, Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and the School of Allied Health Sciences.