

# SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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## NEW ARTHRITIS DRUG MAY STOP DISEASE'S PROGRESSION

DALLAS — November 14, 1995 — Arthritis researchers at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas are conducting a clinical trial to test a drug that they hope will treat arthritis symptoms and stop the disease before it progresses.

For decades arthritis specialists have searched for such a drug. They may have finally found that agent in Tenidap, a drug that investigators at UT Southwestern are putting to the test in a six-month clinical trial that will involve about 15 patients.

The drug is believed to stop the joint damage caused by rheumatoid arthritis, said Dr. Peter Lipsky, director of the Harold C. Simmons Arthritis Research Center.

The goal of the UT Southwestern study is to determine if the drug actually slows or stops bone erosion or narrowing of the spaces between joints, said Lipsky, the Harold C. Simmons Professor in Arthritis Research and principal investigator of the Tenidap trial.

"We're interested in finding out if the drug has a good effect on patients experiencing the early stages of rheumatoid arthritis," Lipsky said. "We want to find out if the drug will stop the disease before it causes painful and possibly debilitating joint damage."

Lipsky, who is working under federal study guidelines mandated by the Food and Drug Administration for testing new drugs, said the drug already is available in Holland. "The results that they have had in that country are promising," he said. "It looks like Tenidap is safe, and it appears to have effects comparable to a treatment combining nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and a disease-modifying drug."

The drug appears useful because it seems to inhibit the production of a combination of body chemicals that spur inflammation in the joints — prostaglandins, which are

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## ARTHRITIS DRUG — 2

inflammatory mediators, and interleukin-6. Interleukin-6 is a specific cytokine that regulates inflammation and autoimmune responses.

"We categorize drugs that are useful in treating rheumatoid arthritis as anti-inflammatory or disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs," Lipsky said. "This drug seems to be the first one that has both properties, so the possibility of a single therapy, especially for patients with early rheumatoid arthritis, is quite exciting."

Lipsky and his colleagues are comparing the effects of Tenidap to methotrexate, a standard therapeutic drug approved by the FDA for treatment of rheumatoid arthritis symptoms.

Joining Lipsky in the study are Dr. Arthur Kavanaugh, assistant professor of internal medicine, and Dr. John Cush, associate professor of internal medicine. Lisa Nichols, a professional nurse practitioner, is the clinical study coordinator.

Rheumatoid arthritis patients interested in participating in the study may call (214) 648-3466.

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