

NEWS

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*****Harold Simmons Arthritis Center to host
world conference on arthritis at UTHSCD.

DALLAS -- An international conference on arthritis of the spine will be held May 31 through June 2 at The University of Texas Health Science Center.

Sponsored by UTHSCD's Harold C. Simmons Arthritis Research Center, the conference will bring invited participants from around the world to discuss the latest research on the group of diseases known as spondyloarthropathies (a variety of forms of arthritis that commonly include arthritis of the spine).

These diseases strike young men, even boys in their teens, who may be recognized by a "frozen" curved spine. They may also have inflammation of the eyes and the peripheral joints.

"There is a strong genetic aspect to these diseases," says Dr. Morris Ziff, director of the research center. "There is great interest in the relationship between the HLA B27 gene and inflammation of spinal joints and ligaments and the peripheral joints." Almost all patients with ankylosing spondylitis, one of the common spondyloarthropathies, have the B27 gene.

"Another aspect is the initiation of the disease. We don't know what triggers ankylosing spondylitis in genetically susceptible people," says Ziff. "We do know that a related condition, Reiter's syndrome, is triggered by known events -- infections."

Reiter's syndrome is triggered by a bacterial infection in the intestine. Following some types of dysentery attacks, people with the B27 gene, mostly young men, get Reiter's syndrome. The syndrome involves inflammation of the urinary tract and the eyes and arthritis.

"There is great interest in the effects of bacterial infection and the resulting immune response on the initiation of this inflammation. Here is a disease with a genetic background and a known trigger that leads to arthritis and tendinitis."

Researchers presenting papers at the conference include: Dr. Eric G. L. Bywaters, University of London; Dr. Sherman B. Weissman, Yale University; Dr. Hugh O. McDevitt, Stanford University School of Medicine; Dr. F. Carl Grumet, Stanford University; Dr. Pavol Ivanyi, the Netherlands Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service.

Also Dr. Joel D. Taurog, University of Minnesota; Dr. Benjamin D. Schwartz, Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis; Dr. T. Douglas Kinsella, University of Calgary; Dr. Andrei Calin, Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases, Bath, Great Britain.

Also Dr. Verna Wright, The University of Leeds, Leeds, Great Britain; Dr. Muhammad A. Khan, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland; Dr. Sjef van der Linden, University Hospital, Berne, Switzerland; Dr. John C. Woodrow, University of Liverpool.

Also Dr. Samuel B. Formal, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research; Dr. Alan Ebringer, University of London; Dr. A. F. Geczy, New South Wales Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service, Sydney, Australia; Dr. Derrick A. Brewerton, University of London; Charles van Bohemen, The

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University of Amsterdam.

Also Dr. David T. Yu, UCLA; Dr. Denys K. Ford, The University of British Columbia; Dr. Bernard Amor, Cochin Hospital, Paris, France; Dr. Gabriel S. Panayi, Guy's Hospital Medical School, London, and Dr. T.E.W. Feltkamp, University of Montpellier, Montpellier, France.

The conference is the first of the Simmons Center's biannual world conferences on ankylosing spondylitis. Harold Simmons, the donor of the funds to establish the research center, is himself a sufferer of ankylosing spondylitis.

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