

# NEWS

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\*\*\*Khorram receives Nominata Award.

DALLAS--It is, of course, a chameleon's prerogative to change its color. The substance that makes the color change possible is melanocyte stimulating hormone (MSH). While MSH causes pigment shifts in lower vertebrates, its function in mammals, including humans is unknown.

Omid Khorram is trying to find the hormone's role. The recently graduated Ph.D. received the Nominata Award, The University of Texas Southwestern Graduate School of Biological Sciences' highest student honor, recognizing him for his academic achievements and research efforts.

Khorram became interested in neuroendocrinology while an undergraduate at the University of California, Berkley. "I came to Dallas to work under Dr. S.M. McCann, (chairman of Physiology). As a human being he is just wonderful to work with. Dr. McCann is one of the legends of endocrinology. The group he has assembled here is one of the strongest in the nation."

Khorram's dissertation concerned the physiological significance of MSH in the mammalian brain. He found the neuropeptide alters the secretion of the hormone prolactin. As MSH rises, so do dopamine levels. The dopamine, in turn, suppresses prolactin. "So far, the role MSH plays in the human brain is undetermined. But it could be significant in certain types of behavior such as learning and motivation. Someday I hope to answer the question, 'What does MSH do in humans?'"

Khorram plans to do a postdoctoral fellowship here at the health science center next year. As for the future? "I hope to get my M.D. because I want to apply my laboratory research to the bedside." Khorram is applying to medical schools for admission in the fall of 1985. His first choice is to remain at Southwestern.

Khorram feels neuroendocrinology will present research challenges for years to come. "No matter how much we learn about the chemistry of the brain we wonder if we'll ever fully understand the mysteries of the mind. New neuropeptides are being discovered every day. But knowing how the whole system is integrated and connected is still a far-off goal. I'm sure we won't find the answer in my lifetime."