

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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UT Southwestern scientist elected to National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine

DALLAS – Oct. 24, 2005 – A UT Southwestern Medical Center faculty member who specializes in gene regulation has been elected to the Institute of Medicine, a component of the prestigious National Academy of Sciences, it was announced today.

Dr. Steven McKnight, chairman of biochemistry, was one of only two Texans among the 64 new members elected in 2005 to the organization, which addresses national health issues.

He brings the total number of current UT Southwestern faculty members inducted into the institute to 17, the largest representation at one institution in Texas and surrounding states.

Members of the Institute of Medicine shape policies affecting public health and advise the federal government on issues involving medical care, research and education. Selection is based on international distinction in science, clinical medicine, public health or medical administration. Inductees are elected by incumbent members.

“This is a notable honor for one of UT Southwestern’s most distinguished and accomplished faculty members,” said Dr. Kern Wildenthal, president of UT Southwestern. “Dr. McKnight’s research has transformed biochemistry and molecular biology, and will have profound potential effects in medical care. We are extremely pleased that his achievements have been nationally recognized by his colleagues.”

Dr. McKnight’s work reaches back 20 years, when he found that a protein that binds to DNA resembled proteins that cause cancer. He correctly predicted that the so-called oncogene proteins would also bind to DNA and cause cancer by improper gene regulation.

More recently, he discovered a mutation in a particular gene causes a condition resembling schizophrenia in mice. Another project has linked mutations in genes that control the body’s “clock” to several conditions, including abnormal eating and sleeping patterns and signs of depression.

“I’m very honored,” Dr. McKnight said of his election. “My research on gene regulation ended up being more pertinent to medicine than one would have imagined. Many disease states result from defects in gene regulation.”

In addition to his research interests, Dr. McKnight oversees a staff of more than 200 faculty members, instructors, postdoctoral fellows, graduate and medical students, administrators, and laboratory technicians.

Dr. McKnight holds the Sam G. Winstead and F. Andrew Bell Distinguished Chair in Biochemistry and the Distinguished Chair in Basic Biomedical Research at UT Southwestern. He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Harvey Society, the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, and the American Chemical Society. He has been a fellow of the American Society for Microbiology and an honorary member of the Japanese Biochemistry Society. He has been awarded the Eli Lilly Award, the Monsanto Award from the National Academy of Sciences and the Newcomb-Cleveland Award from *Science* magazine and a National Institutes of Health Director’s Pioneer Award.

Other Institute of Medicine members at UT Southwestern and the year of their induction are: Dr. Helen Hobbs, 2004; Dr. John McConnell, 2004; Dr. Norman Gant, 2001; Dr. Eric Olson, 2001; Dr. Wildenthal, 1999; Dr. Eric Nestler, 1998; Dr. Carol Tamminga, 1998; Dr. Ron Anderson, 1997; Dr. Scott Grundy, 1995; Dr. Jean Wilson, 1994; Dr. Daniel Foster, 1989; Dr. Alfred Gilman, 1989; Dr. Michael Brown, 1987; Dr. Joseph Goldstein, 1987; Dr. Paul MacDonald (deceased), 1987; Dr. Charles Sprague (deceased), 1979; Dr. Ronald Estabrook, 1975; Dr. Donald Seldin, 1974; and Dr. Bryan Williams (deceased), 1970.

The other Texan elected is Dr. Mary Estes, professor of molecular virology and microbiology and medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, Houston.

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