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UT Southwestern researcher honored by American Heart Association

DALLAS – Nov. 1, 2007 – Dr. Helen Hobbs, director of the Eugene McDermott Center for Human Growth and Development and an investigator for the Howard Hughes Medical Institute at UT Southwestern Medical Center, has been named by the American Heart Association as a Distinguished Scientist.

The award recognizes prominent AHA members whose work has advanced the understanding and management of cardiovascular disease and stroke. Dr. Hobbs, the fifth faculty member from UT Southwestern so honored, is one of four individuals to be selected as a Distinguished Scientist for 2007. The awards will be presented during an AHA meeting in November in Orlando, Fla.

Founding Distinguished Scientists from UT Southwestern named in 2003 were Nobel laureates Drs. Michael Brown, director of the Erik Jonsson Center for Research in Molecular Genetics and Human Disease, and Joseph Goldstein, chairman of molecular genetics, along with Dr. Eric Olson, chairman of molecular biology and director of the Hamon Center for Basic Research in Cancer. In 2005, Dr. Scott Grundy, director of the Center for Human Nutrition at UT Southwestern, was also chosen as a Distinguished Scientist.

With Dr. Hobbs' selection this year, UT Southwestern faculty members represent 13 percent of all the researchers who have been honored by the AHA as Distinguished Scientists. Of the 38 scientists who have been selected over five years, there are now seven from Texas academic medical institutions. More than 70 percent of those are at UT Southwestern.

A professor of internal medicine and molecular genetics, Dr. Hobbs directs the Donald W. Reynolds Cardiovascular Clinical Research Center at UT Southwestern, which includes the Dallas Heart Study, a multiyear, multimillion dollar project aimed at learning more about the hidden causes of heart disease and finding new treatments.

“The American Heart Association has been a longtime supporter of my research and that of young investigators training in my laboratory,” Dr. Hobbs said. “On behalf of my laboratory

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team, and especially my scientific partner, Dr. Jonathan Cohen [professor of internal medicine], we are gratified to receive this award in recognition of our scientific work.”

Dr. Hobbs’ research includes identifying and characterizing the genetic factors responsible for differences in blood cholesterol levels and susceptibility to coronary heart disease. She and her colleagues have discovered genetic defects causing both very high and low plasma levels of cholesterol. Her characterization of these defective genes has provided insights into cholesterol metabolism and identified new drug targets for the treatment of high cholesterol, a major risk factor for atherosclerosis and heart disease.

Dr. Hobbs, who earned her medical degree from Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Medicine and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She also is a member of the American Society for Clinical Investigation and the Association of American Physicians. She is a recipient of the Heinrich Wieland Prize for metabolism research and the American Heart Association Clinical Research Prize.

At UT Southwestern she holds the Eugene McDermott Distinguished Chair for the Study of Human Growth and Development and the Dallas Heart Ball Chair in Cardiology Research.

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