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News

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* * * * * UT biochemist named to
National Academy of Sciences

DALLAS--Dr. Ronald W. Estabrook, a well-known researcher and educator in biochemistry, has been named a member of the National Academy of Sciences--the nation's top scientific advisory group.

Estabrook, chairman of the Department of Biochemistry at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas, Dr. Frederic Bartter, professor of medicine at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio and Dr. Perry L. Adkisson, vice-president of Agriculture and Renewable Resources at Texas A&M University, were three Texans among 60 scientists chosen as new members of the academy Tuesday (April 24) in Washington.

The NAS is an organization of distinguished scientists and engineers concerned with the furtherance of science and its use for human welfare. Its congressional charter of 1863--signed by Abraham Lincoln--calls on the academy to serve as official advisor to the Federal Government, although it is not a government agency.

The new appointments bring the roster of NAS to 1,284.

Estabrook, holder of the Virginia Lazenby O'Hara Chair of Biochemistry, was one of three scientists who discovered the role of a key enzyme system of the body--one which metabolizes, or processes, drugs, pollutants and environmental chemicals so they can be eliminated from the body. It is important in the processes suspected in lung cancer.

This system, known as Cytochrome P-450, first was identified by Estabrook and co-workers as having a role in steroid metabolism. Then they discovered the full scope of the enzyme's actions.

It is most important, Dr. Estabrook explained, with drugs or other chemicals which are not dissolved by water and expelled through the urinary system, but which are dissolved into the fat and organic material of the body. The system works by attaching an oxygen atom to the unwanted molecule--thus rendering it soluble in water so it can be removed by the urinary system.

Estabrook, who has been instrumental in building Southwestern Medical School's Biochemistry and basic sciences departments, said, "I'm very pleased. It's really quite an honor. Of course, there are a number of others here at the school who are equally qualified."

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Dr. Frederick Bonte, dean of Southwestern Medical School, depicted Estabrook as "one of the foremost biochemists of the day" and said the NAS honor was one of the highest that an official body could confer on a scientist.

Estabrook came to The University of Texas Health Science Center in 1968, having been a professor of physical biochemistry at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine at Philadelphia.

He received a bachelor of science degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and a Ph.D. in Biochemistry from the University of Rochester.

The research scientist has been extremely active in medical education. He has served on the Liaison Committee on Medical Education of the American Medical Association and the Association of American Medical Colleges from 1975 until the present. He was, in 1973 and 1974, chairman of the Council of Academic Societies of the AAMC.

Dr. Estabrook is or has been the editor of a number of publications including *Life Sciences*, *Xenobiotica*, *Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics*, and *Archives of Biochemistry and Biophysics*.

In addition, he has served on scores of committees concerned with health and has lectured over much of the world.

He is the author of more than 200 papers on different aspects of metabolism.

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