

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS RESEARCH PROFESSORSHIP ENDOWED

DALLAS -- April 8, 1994 -- Gifts from John Thomas and Kenney Marie Dixon Pickens of Dallas and from Mrs. Pickens' mother, Mrs. T.K. Dixon, Jr., of Houston, are enabling The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas to recruit a top multiple sclerosis researcher.

Previous gifts from Mrs. Pickens and Mrs. Dixon had established a fund for multiple sclerosis research valued at over \$100,000. A new pledge of \$75,000 from Mrs. Pickens plus matching funds from UT Southwestern's Fund for Molecular Research will be added to the existing donations to create the Kenney Marie Dixon-Pickens Distinguished Professorship in Multiple Sclerosis Research.

"Our highest priority is to let the city know that an effort is being made to support and encourage research in multiple sclerosis at UT Southwestern," Mrs. Pickens said. "Financial support of basic research has enabled medical scientists to make significant advances in understanding MS, but much more remains to be done before we can eliminate this terrible disease. This distinguished professorship, we hope, will enable UT Southwestern to attract and support leaders in this vitally important research field who will help us cure and prevent MS."

Dr. Kern Wildenthal, UT Southwestern president, expressed deep gratitude to Mrs. Pickens and Mrs. Dixon. "Their generous gifts will allow UT Southwestern to become a leading site for multiple sclerosis research."

Multiple sclerosis is an autoimmune disease that damages the protective outer coating of nerve fibers in the brain and spinal column. Three out of 10 of its victims wind up in wheelchairs. Recent research has produced medications that appear to slow the progress of MS, but so far researchers have not been able to pinpoint the cause nor to reverse damage already done.

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"Multiple sclerosis is one of the most perplexing and challenging neurologic diseases and one of our very top research priorities at UT Southwestern," said Dr. S. Clifford Schold, chairman of neurology at UT Southwestern and holder of the Dorothy Rogers Cullum Distinguished Chair in Neuro-oncology. "It commonly affects young adults, and its course is highly variable from patient to patient. There are numerous clues about the cause of the disease and the most effective treatment, but we do not yet understand how to fit these clues into a coherent picture.

"The Dixon-Pickens Distinguished Professorship will be of vital importance in helping us attract an outstanding researcher who can lead our efforts to understand the disease and develop treatments for it."

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