UT SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL CENTER NEWS

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UT Southwestern scientist receives international award for pediatric research

DALLAS – Dec. 9, 2005 – Dr. Eric Olson, chairman of molecular biology at UT Southwestern Medical Center, has won the fourth annual Pollin Prize in Pediatric Research, a lifetime achievement award.

The Pollin Prize recognizes outstanding contributions in biomedical or public-health research related to the health of children.

Dr. Olson shares the $100,000 international prize with Dr. Abraham Rudolph, emeritus professor of pediatrics and senior staff member of the Cardiovascular Research Institute at the University of California, San Francisco. They also will split and disburse an additional $100,000 to young investigators working in their fields.

Dr. Olson was chosen for his discovery of the genes that control formation of the heart, providing insight into congenital heart disease and possible diagnosis and treatment, according to NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, which administers the prize. The Pollin Prize was created by Irene and Abe Pollin and their family of Chevy Chase, Md., and is funded by the Linda and Kenneth Pollin Foundation.

"I am honored to receive the Pollin Prize and to share it with Abraham Rudolph, an icon in pediatric cardiology," Dr. Olson said. "Dr. Rudolph's pioneering work on techniques for treatment of circulatory disorders in children beautifully complements the work from my laboratory on the network of genes that controls cardiovascular development.

"I am also especially grateful to the amazing group of students and young scientists I have been so fortunate to work with during my career in Texas. They deserve the lion's share of credit for this award."

Dr. Olson directs the Nancy B. and Jake L. Hamon Center for Basic Research in Cancer and the Nearburg Family Center for Basic Research in Pediatric Oncology. He holds the Robert

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A. Welch Distinguished Chair in Science and the Annie and Willie Nelson Professorship in Stem Cell Research. He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Medicine and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

"These two scientists and their far-reaching research have advanced our understanding of the causes of congenital cardiac anomalies and their treatment," said Dr. Herbert Pardes, president and chief executive officer of NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital. "Conditions that were often a death sentence are now effectively treated, and often entirely prevented."

The heart is the first organ to form and function in the embryo. Abnormalities in heart development result in congenital heart disease, the most common birth defect and the leading noninfectious cause of death in children under 1 year of age.

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