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**UT Southwestern receives continued funding from NIH
for participation in Inner City Asthma Consortium**

DALLAS – Nov. 23, 2009 – UT Southwestern Medical Center is among 10 institutions selected by the National Institutes of Health to share \$56 million over five years as part of the Inner City Asthma Consortium (ICAC).

The ICAC, which receives funding through the NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, investigates novel treatments and causes of asthma in urban children. Dr. Rebecca Gruchalla, chief of allergy and immunology at UT Southwestern, said continued funding of the consortium is imperative because morbidity and mortality continues to be highest in inner-city children and adolescents with asthma. Dr. Gruchalla has led the Dallas arm of the ICAC for seven years.

“The proposed studies undertaken through our continued role in the ICAC are novel, innovative and likely to help us truly make a difference in the lives of inner-city children suffering from this often debilitating disease,” Dr. Gruchalla said.

Ongoing studies include a prospective, longitudinal evaluation of environmental factors that influence the development of the immune system and asthma, as well as clinical trials of possible treatment therapies.

Previous ICAC-funded research has found that:

- A coordinated, guidelines-based approach to asthma management quickly controls asthma among inner-city adolescents.
- Adding exhaled nitric oxide to guidelines-based care does not improve clinical outcomes.
- Screening tests used to predict asthma activity in some patients may have little tracking success when applied to people with persistent disease who are adhering to their health care regimens.

With continued NIH funding, Dr. Michelle Gill, assistant professor of pediatrics at UT Southwestern, is leading key mechanistic studies that explore how anti-IgE therapy can decrease viral-induced seasonal asthma exacerbations. IgE antibodies are the fuel in the immune system that

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perpetuates asthmatic reactions and can make asthma worse in people who are sensitive to particular allergens.

“The goal of our mechanistic studies is to define how allergens interfere with immune responses to respiratory viruses. We will also investigate whether anti-IgE therapy improves these responses to seasonal viral infections in patients with asthma,” Dr. Gill said.

The consortium is administered by the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In addition to UT Southwestern, research is being conducted at Boston University School of Medicine; Children’s Memorial Hospital in Chicago; George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences in Washington, D.C.; National Jewish Health in Denver; Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine; University of California, San Francisco; Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City; and the Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit.

Visit <http://www.utsouthwestern.org/allergy> to learn more about UT Southwestern’s clinical services for asthma and allergies.

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