

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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UT SOUTHWESTERN SCIENTIST NAMED BY W.M. KECK FOUNDATION AS DISTINGUISHED YOUNG SCHOLAR IN MEDICAL RESEARCH

DALLAS – July 15, 2003 – Dr. Hongtao Yu, an assistant professor of pharmacology at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, has been named a Distinguished Young Scholar in Medical Research by the Los Angeles-based W.M. Keck Foundation.

The award of up to \$1 million over five years will support the scientist's research and enable UT Southwestern to purchase equipment and resources to facilitate his ongoing studies into the mechanisms that ensure how a dividing cell equally distributes the same number of chromosomes between the two "daughter" cells. These studies might help explain the phenomenon observed in cancer cells, which usually have abnormal numbers of chromosomes.

"I am pleased to receive this recognition for my research," said Dr. Yu, one of only five Keck Foundation Scholar winners nationwide this year. "I feel honored to be a part of a group of distinguished young scientists. My laboratory is taking a multidisciplinary approach to study the mechanism of chromosome inheritance. This award will be critical for us to expand our efforts in the lab."

Dr. Yu is the Michael L. Rosenberg Scholar in Medical Research through the Endowed Scholars Program in Medical Science at UT Southwestern. The program is designed to launch the next generation's scientific leaders on their biomedical careers by providing seed money and startup support for groundbreaking research projects.

Born in Shandong, China, Dr. Yu received his bachelor's degree in chemistry from Peking University in Beijing and his doctorate in chemistry from Harvard University. He was a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard Medical School before coming to UT Southwestern in 1999.

"This is a select group of researchers who have been honored with this prestigious award," said Dr. Alfred Gilman, chairman of pharmacology and one of UT Southwestern's four Nobel laureates. "Dr. Yu is a remarkable young researcher with a very promising future."

The W.M. Keck Foundation's Distinguished Young Scholars in Medical Research

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program was established in 1998 as a five-year, \$25 million initiative to support groundbreaking research addressing the fundamental mechanisms of human disease. The foundation's board recently renewed the program for an additional five years, bringing to \$50 million the total amount bestowed through the program.

The awards are given to young investigators who exhibit extraordinary promise for independent basic biological and medical research and who demonstrate a capacity for future academic leadership.

Robert A. Day, chairman and chief executive officer of the Keck Foundation, said the foundation is pleased to be able to support scientists and their research.

"Their work has enormous potential for future breakthroughs, and they embody the best of our nation's future scientific leadership," he said. "When the next phase of the Young Scholars Program is completed in 2008, we will have invested \$50 million in the work of 50 of the nation's best and brightest medical researchers. We are hopeful this investment in the Keck Scholars will greatly benefit society for generations to come with continued advances in understanding – and combating – the fundamental mechanisms of human disease."

Applicants are nominated by their academic institutions and then evaluated individually by the foundation's medical research staff and the Young Scholars Scientific Advisory Committee, an outside panel of scientific experts. This year's advisory committee included scientists from the University of Southern California, the Whitehead Institute at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Emory University School of Medicine and Stanford University.

Other winners are Dr. Daniel T. Chiu of the University of Washington, Seattle; Dr. Adrian Ferre´-D'Amare´ of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle; Dr. F. Nina Papavasiliou of Rockefeller University, New York; and Dr. Kevin P. White of Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

The W.M. Keck Foundation was established in 1954 by the late Mr. Keck, founder of Superior Oil Company.

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