

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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NIH AWARDS MOLECULAR MICROBIOLOGY TRAINING GRANT

DALLAS – October 21, 1997 – The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has awarded a \$451,238 five-year grant to UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas to train graduate students and postdoctoral fellows annually in molecular microbiology.

Dr. Michael Norgard, acting chairman of microbiology, and Dr. Robert Munford, professor of internal medicine and microbiology, will co-direct the program, funded by the NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. The training will be centered around the Molecular Microbiology Graduate Program in the UT Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. Students from other graduate programs within the Division of Cell and Microbiology also will be encouraged to participate.

"This new training grant focuses renewed attention on the outstanding molecular microbiology research and training available at UT Southwestern, and it is formal affirmation that we are indeed competitive with the very best of such programs in the nation," said Norgard, holder of the Roy and Christine Sturgis Chair in Biomedical Research.

The program will emphasize the molecular basis of bacterial pathogenesis, interactions of pathogens with host cells, viral pathogenesis, bacterial toxins, sexually transmitted diseases, parasitology, pathology, anti-microbial drug design, vaccine development and immune mechanisms.

"We intend to strive for diversity, while maintaining a strong molecular microbiology theme," Norgard said. "This is a departure from the classical structuring of most microbiology training programs, but it is entirely consistent with the current multidisciplinary philosophy of the Division of Cell and Molecular Biology within the graduate school."

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The faculty of the core training team will come from four UT Southwestern departments and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) at UT Southwestern.

The goals of the program are to provide top-notch molecular microbiology training to graduate students, to continue training Ph.D. fellows and to identify and support M.D. fellows in infectious disease who are interested in careers in academic medicine.

"This will further solidify and provide a more formal structure to the long-standing research collaborations, shared-funding initiatives and joint-training efforts that historically have existed between the Department of Microbiology and the infectious disease division," said Munford, holder of the Jan and Henri Bromberg Chair in Internal Medicine. "M.D. fellows will have outstanding research opportunities within basic-science laboratories and will bring with them clinical perspectives that can enrich the training experiences of their Ph.D. colleagues. This is truly a symbiotic relationship that adds to the novelty of the training program."

Microbiology is an important research area because of disturbing new trends in emerging and re-emerging pathogens that are defying many of the drugs and antibiotics currently in use, Norgard said. "Hence, as we train young biomedical researchers, we shouldn't lose sight of the historical and contemporary roles research in microbiology and infectious disease have played in our lives."

The other faculty participating in the program are: Dr. Bruce Beutler, professor of internal medicine and HHMI investigator; Dr. Leon Eidels, professor of microbiology; Richard Gaynor, professor of internal medicine and microbiology and holder of the Andrea L. Simmons Distinguished Chair in Cancer Virology; Dr. Eric Hansen, professor of microbiology; Dr. Stephen Johnston, professor of biochemistry and internal medicine and holder of the Dr. Eugene Tragus Chair in Molecular Cardiology; Dr. Margaret Phillips, associate professor of pharmacology; Dr. Justin Radolf, professor of internal medicine and microbiology; and Dr. Nancy Street, assistant professor of microbiology. Plans are already under way to expand the training faculty to 18.

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