

JT News

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****UTHSCD pediatric oncologist
named Burroughs Wellcome Scholar

DALLAS -- Dr. Barton A. Kamen, associate professor of pediatrics and pharmacology at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas has been named recipient of the Burroughs Wellcome Clinical Pharmacology Award for 1987. The award recognizes work in teaching, training and research in clinical pharmacology and provides continued support for the awardee's work.

The \$250,000 award amount is for five-year support for the associate professor's continued work in work in the pharmacology of pediatric oncology. Kamen's research involves his working in the laboratory and seeing patients on a regular basis through the oncology-hematology program at Children's Medical Center, which is the health science center's pediatric teaching hospital and located on the same medical campus. He also serves an oncologist on the brain-tumor team there.

While Kamen is highly respected by his colleagues in both oncology and pediatrics, he is also one of the most popular physicians in Children's. When the pediatric oncologist goes to clinic or visits individual patients at Children's, his pockets are stuffed with hats. His favorite -- a propeller beanie with a Dr. Smurf pin -- is also the children's favorite, he says. He often lets his patients choose a hat to wear while they watch him do magic tricks before an examination or a potentially painful procedure, such as bone-marrow sampling or chemotherapy.

The pediatric oncologist holds both an M.D. and a Ph.D. from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland and did his pediatric residency at Yale University School of Medicine. Before coming to the UT health science center in 1984, he was an associate professor of pediatrics and pharmacology at Midwest Children's Cancer Center, Medical College of Wisconsin and Milwaukee Children's Hospital.

The physician said that he has always wanted to be a scientist and a pediatrician. While he was in junior high school, he reported that he performed surgery on rats in the basement of his house. "I usually had between 100 and 200 rats at a time. I was interested in learning about their immune systems. When they were two to three days old, I would take out their thymus glands." He also removed the livers or took out a kidney to observe the growth of the other kidney as it struggled to take over the functions for both. His most surprising finding: "All my patients lived," he said.

"My goal is to bridge the gap between science and clinical medicine," he said. The researcher hopes that, by using his knowledge of drug therapy, his background in cell biology and his interest in excellent patient care, he will be able to use the cancer research that works in laboratory animals and perfect it so that it will cross over into clinical care.

Kamen is known for his interest in the use of methotrexate in the treatment of leukemia. "The drug's been in use since 1950 so we know it works. However, I want to understand why it works -- and why some of the other drugs work -- and how we can make

(More)

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them effective in even more patients. If we can predict who will do well and who won't do well with a particular drug therapy, we can spare both unnecessary toxicity to the child and wasted time."

About the award, Dr. Joseph Warshaw, professor and chairman of pediatrics at UTHSCD, said, "Dr. Kamen brought a strong pharmacology and biochemistry background to the health science center when he joined our faculty several years ago. And the kids love him. He is a very caring and thoughtful doctor who shares his patients' problems."

Other awardees for appointments as Burroughs Wellcome Scholars in Clinical Pharmacology are Ross Feldman, M.D., the University of Iowa, and William Hait, M.D., Ph.D., Yale University. The three new appointments become official July 1.

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NOTE: The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas comprises Southwestern Medical School, Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and the School of Allied Health Sciences.