

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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NEW MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SPECIALIST ESTABLISHING COMPREHENSIVE TREATMENT PROGRAM

DALLAS — August 4, 1995 — Multiple sclerosis strikes its targets early, often with a paralyzing effect — literally — on their lives. As the new head of the MS program at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, Dr. Elliot Frohman is setting out to create a comprehensive treatment center that will combine the expertise of physicians from different disciplines in order to increase MS patients' access to cutting-edge therapies.

Formerly at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Frohman said UT Southwestern appealed to him because it offers young medical investigators tremendous opportunities, augmented by the enthusiastic support for medical research in the community. "Texans don't seem to do anything halfway," said Frohman, who arrived here in July. He praised the quality of the faculty at UT Southwestern as well as the leadership in the neurology department.

While MS is a devastating disease that continues to baffle researchers, steady advances have been made in recent years in evaluating and treating the disorder, which tends to strike otherwise healthy individuals in their 20s and 30s.

The comprehensive care center that Frohman is developing employs the expertise of neurologists, physical therapists, a clinical psychologist and a neuro-urologist.

"MS patients have a number of different and challenging problems, and our team approach allows patients to be evaluated by subspecialists in a variety of medical areas," Frohman said. As director, he will coordinate the clinical perspectives to ensure that the focus remains on the whole patient instead of just individual parts.

Because MS patients often are eager to try whatever promising therapies are developed, Frohman would like to set up a network with community physicians so that

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patients could participate in clinical trials of new drugs and other MS therapies.

Besides the threat to their mobility, MS patients also face uncertain futures that could include speech impairment, weakness, sensory and visual loss, and tremor. An estimated 3,500 Dallas-area residents suffer from the disease.

A number of UT Southwestern research projects, including one directed by Dr. Sally Ward, assistant professor of microbiology, and recently underwritten by the local Yellow Rose Gala, could one day lead to more successful treatment methods or a cure for MS.

Frohman is an assistant professor of neurology and ophthalmology and director of the center's multiple sclerosis program as well as vertigo and eye movement clinics. Frohman's research has focused on the immunology of MS and more recently has centered on eye movement and vestibular abnormalities. Many patients with MS have problems with balance, dizziness and spatial disorientation. He will work with the Department of Otorhinolaryngology and vestibular physical therapists on the evaluation and treatment of patients with these complaints.

The MS program at UT Southwestern also will feature a basic research unit dedicated to developing new methods for slowing the disease's progression. Frohman explains that a major part of the research effort will focus on the promotion of neurological recovery in MS plaque lesions. MS is caused by the accumulation of plaques (also known as sclerosis) in the brain and spinal cord.

Frohman received his undergraduate training at the University of California, San Diego and earned his M.D. and Ph.D. at the University of California, Irvine, College of Medicine. He completed residency training at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and Johns Hopkins Hospital, where he was chief resident. Before joining UT Southwestern, Frohman was a fellow in neuro-otology and neurophysiology at Johns Hopkins.

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