

# SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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## UT SOUTHWESTERN BREAST CANCER PROJECT WINS NIH GRANT

DALLAS – August 2, 2000 -- A UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas-based study that may shed new light on how to prevent breast cancer received a \$1.2 million grant from the National Institutes of Health.

Dr. Banu Arun, an assistant professor of internal medicine who is principal investigator for the study, will lead a research team examining molecular markers in 100 women at high risk of breast cancer before and after the women are treated with the breast-cancer drug tamoxifen.

"We hope to show that abnormalities in these markers will be corrected by tamoxifen treatment," she said.

If so, these markers then can be used in future prevention efforts to hasten the testing of new chemoprevention methods, she said.

"Ultimately, such chemoprevention will have a major impact on overall breast cancer morbidity and mortality," Arun said.

The American Cancer Society estimates that 183,200 new invasive cases of breast cancer will be diagnosed this year, and that an estimated 41,200 Americans will die from the disease in 2000.

"The whole aim is to find an agent to decrease the incidence of breast cancer. We know that tamoxifen does this clinically, but this study may tell us about the mechanisms that lead to that decrease, which markers are involved and if these markers can be used in future trials with other chemoprevention agents."

Each of the 100 women will be chosen based upon their projected five-year probability of developing invasive breast cancer. The women selected will undergo before-treatment and after-treatment breast tissue analysis. Half of the women will be given tamoxifen for three months; the other half will receive a placebo. Arun and her colleagues will then look for markers in the breast tissue, and compare what changed.

"That will give us an idea of which markers might play a role in breast cancer

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progression," she said.

Arun said the study should provide answers to at least two questions: How does tamoxifen work? And what are the markers that can be studied with other drugs in the future?

"If we can identify these markers, then maybe we can use another agent that has fewer side effects than tamoxifen and use that drug as a chemoprevention agent," she said.

Besides UT Southwestern, UT M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston and Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas are participating in the study, which is scheduled to begin this fall.

Other key members of the research team include UT Southwestern faculty members Dr. David Euhus, an assistant professor of surgical oncology; Dr. Gail Tomlinson, an assistant professor of pediatrics; and Dr. Denise Yardley, an assistant professor of internal medicine.

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