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NEWS
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*****Ear specialist appointed to chair
new ENT department at UTHSCD.

DALLAS--The first chairman of the newly formed Department of Otorhinolaryngology (science of ear, nose and throat) at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas will be Dr. William Meyerhoff, an ear specialist and one of the co-investigators of a national cochlear implant research project.

Meyerhoff will assume his new duties at the health science center April 1, coming from the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, where he is professor of Otolaryngology.

"We are delighted to have one of the outstanding young otorhinolaryngologists in the country to organize our new department," said Dr. Kern Wildenthal, dean of Southwestern Medical School, a component of UTHSCD. "Dr. Meyerhoff is at the forefront of his field in researching cochlear implants."

The dean also said the new department under Meyerhoff's leadership will be responsible for furnishing clinical services to Callier Center for Communication Disorders, a component of The University of Texas at Dallas.

Cochlear implants are still under investigation, but they have already helped about 200 deaf people to "hear" again since the first implant was done more than 20 years ago. Implants can be successful in those who are completely deaf but have a functional hearing nerve.

An internal coil is implanted under the skin behind the ear with a wire placed in the fluid that fills the cochlea (inner ear). A ground wire is placed into the Eustacian tube through the middle ear.

About two months after this surgery the patient is fitted with an external coil aligned over the internal coil. This is worn like a hearing aid with an external microphone to pick up sound. The microphone transforms sound into electrical current. This current travels from the external coil through the skin into the internal coil stimulating the hearing nerve and enabling the patient to hear sounds. Patients describe the sounds as unlike any they have ever heard. But one patient said the most similar sound is that of "the crackling of an old-time radio with so much static you couldn't even tell what program was on."

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Training in decoding the different noises is essential to the success of the implant, says Dr. Robert Anderson, assistant professor of Otorhinolaryngology.

Implant patients can learn to tell when a door closes, the phone rings or people are talking, but at the present time they cannot distinguish words through hearing alone.

The new chairman's experience in other medical centers in San Antonio and in Minneapolis should enhance the development of this new department, said Dr. Jimmie Shiu, an otorhinolaryngologist in private practice and clinical associate professor of Surgery. "I expect this to become one of the strongest departments in the country." Shiu looks forward to research by Meyerhoff into the cause and treatment of presbycusis (loss of hearing secondary to aging).

Before Meyerhoff joined the faculty at University of Minnesota in 1977, he was assistant professor of Otorhinolaryngology at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio and director of the Division of Otorhinolaryngology at Audie Murphy Veterans Administration Hospital in San Antonio. He did a residency in General Surgery at Evanston Hospital in Evanston, Ill., and a residency in Otolaryngology at University of Minnesota. He received an M.D. from Northwestern University in 1966 and a Ph.D. from University of Minnesota in 1979.

Meyerhoff's research interests include head and neck oncology, maxillofacial trauma and ear pathology and physiology.

The executive secretary-treasurer of the Society of University Otolaryngologists, Meyerhoff is an executive board member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology, Self-Improvement Program. He is also a member of The American Council of Otolaryngology, Medical Aspects of Noise Trauma Committee and of the editorial boards of Geriatrics and Ear and Hearing.

He served as program director of the International Symposium on Sensorineural Hearing Loss, Vertigo, and Tinnitus in Minneapolis in 1979 and as U.S. coordinator for the Second International Ear Symposium in Santiago, Chile, in 1980.

Meyerhoff has written about 100 papers, abstracts and textbook chapters.

The search committee for the Otorhinolaryngology chairman was chaired by Dr. William Fry, chairman of Surgery.

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