



Scoop

July 8, 2005

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL AT HOUSTON

Events to Know

July

12 Texas Medical Center Women's Health Network Seminar, Women's Health and the 2005 Legislature: How Did We Fare? 5:30-7 p.m., HAM-TMC Library. Information, 713-794-2482.

13 Employee Benefits Informational Session. Noon, MSB 3.001. Representatives from UT System and Payflex will be on hand.

14 Employee Benefits Informational Session. Noon, MSI Auditorium.

14 TMC Channel 11 Spirit of Texas Food Drive Party on the Plaza. 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. TMC Commons.

15 Faculty Registration Form for Student Retreat Due. \$120 fee. Aug. 12-13 event. Information, classof2008@yahoo.com

20 Employee Benefits Informational Session. Noon, HCPC Auditorium.

UT Most Interest

Dr. Richard Smalling, Cardiology, was quoted in the *Houston Chronicle* regarding artificial hearts. **Dr.**



Ferid Murad, Integrative Biology and

Pharmacology, recently completed a lecture tour in Italy, Prague, Spain, and Germany. He chaired the jury for the Rey Jaime Research Prize in Spain and received his ninth honorary degree from Charles University in Prague, which was founded in 1348. **CORRECTION: Dr. Ronald Kerman**, Surgery, Division of Immunology and Organ Transplantation, was elected to the International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation Board of Directors (2004-2007).

DOWHAN'S MERIT AWARD SETS MEDICAL SCHOOL RECORD

Thirty-two years ago, **Dr. William Dowhan** was a Harvard Medical School post-doc toiling in the lab, purifying enzymes responsible for synthesizing phospholipids. He came to the Medical School following that fellowship funded by the American Cancer Society to join the faculty and promptly wrote a grant to the National Institutes of Health to continue this line of work.

That grant, "Structure and Function of Membrane Proteins" is now in its 32nd year of NIH funding with the recent awarding of a prestigious National Institute of General Medical Sciences NIH MERIT Award. This makes it the longest-running NIH grant that was begun at the Medical School. (**Dr. Samuel Kaplan**, chair of the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, is the holder of an NIH grant in its 37th year, which was transferred to UT in its 24th year.)

"In the 1970s, membranes and membrane proteins were new things to look at, and giving the grant a broad title was a safe thing to do because you could do almost any kind of work within that discipline," explained Dowhan, holder of the John S. Dunn, Sr., Chair in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.



Dr. Dowhan

(Cont'd. on back)

WILLERSON PROVIDES UPDATE TO MEDICAL SCHOOL AUDIENCE

During an update session for all Medical School faculty, staff, and students, **Dr. James T. Willerson**, president of the UT Health Science Center at Houston, provided early morning and late afternoon briefings June 28 at the School.

During both sessions, all in attendance received a comprehensive update covering topics such as fund-raising activities, legislative outcomes, recruitment of new scientists, current and future construction plans within the health science center, Brown Foundation Institute of Molecular Medicine for the Prevention of Human Diseases (IMM), Texas Heart Institute, and much more.

Noting his confidence in the leadership of the deans of each of the six schools, Willerson emphasized a continual theme of raising the bar to make outstanding programs even better. High on his list for raising that bar is an aggressive construction program that includes much needed research space.

"The Coordinating Board says we (UT Health Science Center at Houston) are 800,000 square feet below our research space needs," he noted, while itemizing a long list of campus growth initiatives. Those include the Medical School's new Research Replacement Building, the recently completed School of Nursing and Student Community Center, and the Sarofim Research Building that will open next spring to house the IMM. Additionally, the university is planning new buildings for the Mental Sciences Institute and the Dental Branch. And, he reminded the audience of his efforts to secure Tuition Revenue Bond funding for the new clinic building now owned by the UT Health Science Center.

Recruiting additional faculty identified as among the world's best in their fields is essential for

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http://www.med.uth.tmc.edu/community_affairs/escoop.htm

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NEW ICMJE REQUIREMENT FOR CLINICAL TRIALS SEEKING PUBLICATION

The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) has established a requirement that all clinical trials be entered in a public registry before enrollment of the first patient as a condition of consideration for publication. The goal in implementing this requirement is “to promote the public good by ensuring that everyone can find key information about every clinical trial whose principal aim is to shape medical decision making.”

Clinicaltrials.gov provides a medium allowing organizations and individuals to register the ICJME requested data. All UT health science center investigators will be able to register trials under UTHSC-H. Registration is done by the sponsor; thus, multi-centered sponsored trials most likely will be registered by the sponsor. UTHSC-H sponsored clinical trials, investigator initiated trials, IND (investigational new drug) and IDE (investigational device exemption) held trials will need to be registered for consideration of publication by the ICJME.

This policy applies to qualifying clinical trials that start recruiting on or after July 1, 2005. The ICJME will consider ongoing trials for publication if they are registered by Sept. 13, 2005.

For more information on the requirement, go to: <http://prsinfo.clinicaltrials.gov/>

To register your trial, contact **Catey Carter**, 713-500-3524, e-mail: catharine.v.carter@uth.tmc.edu

Dowhan award, cont'd.

Although the title has remained the same over more than 30 years, the science has changed with the times and the research has become more focused. “During the molecular biology boom of the 1980s, we did a lot of genetic studies and developed bacteria and yeast cells with altered lipid composition to see how cell and membrane functions were affected. Over time, we have specialized in lipids,” he said.

Lipids affect how membrane proteins fold, Dowhan has found, and the misfolding of proteins plays an important role in diseases such as cystic fibrosis, Alzheimer’s, and mad cow disease. “We’ve also found a specific lipid in mitochondria — cardiolipin — the lack of which causes apoptosis (programmed cell death) and the loss of proper memory function,” he explained.

The recent MERIT Award — which is for \$2.4 million over the first five years and an anticipated similar amount for the following five years, pending administrative review — will allow Dowhan to do some high-risk experiments in his area of lipid expertise. “It encourages you to take some chances that you may not normally do if you had to get a renewal in a few years, and the results could prove to be a great breakthrough,” he said.

MERIT Awards provide long-term support to research that has received at least 10 years of funding and that has ranked in the top 10 percent by NIH review in recent funding cycles. The award is provided to investigators “whose research competence and productivity are distinctly superior and who are likely to continue to perform in an outstanding manner.”

With more than 30 years of superior results, Dowhan has secured another decade in which to pursue his path of research excellence.

LAB ANIMAL SITE VISIT HERE JULY 25 –28

The Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care – International (AAALAC) site visit team will be recertifying the health science center’s animal care and use program July 25-28.

The site visit will not only include all facilities of the Center for Laboratory Animal Medicine and Care (CLAMC), but also will include all satellite facilities that are approved by the Animal Welfare Committee. All research laboratories that use animals also will be made available for visitation, if requested by the site visitors.

Of primary interest will be survival surgery, prolonged animal restraint, trauma, or procedures that deal with biohazardous agents. Laboratories selected for visits will be random.

“We hope, that as a result of this site visit, that our program will continue to be fully accredited” said **Dr. Bradford Goodwin**, executive director for CLAMC. For further information, call 713-500-4453, or 713-500-7542.

Willerson, cont'd.

our future, Willerson noted. These world’s best scientists, he said, will complement the health science center’s outstanding faculty, including the only Nobel Laureate of Medicine and Physiology in residence in the Texas Medical Center, and will help in many ways to define the institution’s future.

Of the \$7 million requested in the last session of the Texas Legislature for recruiting the world’s best scientists, we received \$2.5 million annually to add to the \$3 million annually received two years ago. “We are already talking to some outstanding individuals about joining our enterprise,” he said.

On the topic of university leadership, Willerson affirmed his working relationship with Chief Operating Officer **Mike McKinney, M.D.** Willerson noted that, as president, he is accountable for the university’s success or failure, and while he works closely with McKinney, the chief operating officer is responsible for implementing Willerson’s decisions.

On a related topic, Willerson emphasized his accountability to his bosses, the UT System Board of Regents, and the chancellor and executive vice chancellor for health affairs. He emphasized his dedication to the UT Health Science Center, all of its six schools, and the Texas Heart Institute, where he currently serves as president-elect. “I don’t plan to go anywhere,” he said. “I want to keep doing what I’m doing and be helpful.”

In an effort to answer questions about fund raising, Willerson discussed the challenge of asking donors for financial contributions, noting that even with a vision and a person they believe in, donors are not always inclined to give. Willerson has an impressive track record of cultivating private donors — many of them his own cardiology patients. His fund-raising efforts have translated into \$193 million in private philanthropy for the UT Health Science Center over the last three years.

Willerson also explained that his vision for the IMM — which he conceived in 1989 as he came to the UT Medical School as chair of internal medicine — was rooted in the belief that a new institute not tied to any one school would benefit from financial management by a director not burdened with issues outside the IMM and from opportunities for collaboration with multiple UT schools and other Texas Medical Center institutions.

The June 28 update was the first of a new quarterly Medical School presentation series during which Willerson will talk with Medical School faculty and staff. Dates for future sessions will be announced later.