

HSC Physicians Named Memorial Hermann-TMC Physicians of the Year

By Meredith Raine, *Institutional Advancement*



Juanita Romans, CEO of Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center, congratulates James J. McCarthy, M.D., assistant professor of emergency medicine at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston and winner of the 2006 Physician of the Year Award at Memorial Hermann-TMC. Photo by Dwight Andrews

Two doctors on the faculty of The University of Texas Medical School at Houston have been named the 2006 Physicians of the Year at Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center and Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital.

During an annual medical staff meeting Dec. 14, James J. McCarthy, M.D., became the first emergency medicine specialist to earn Memorial Hermann-TMC's top award for excellence in leadership and patient care.

McCarthy joined the UT Medical School faculty in 2001 and is assistant professor and assistant residency program director in the Department of Emergency Medicine. He also is the medical director of the hospital's emergency center.

Mesfin Woldesenbet, M.D., assistant professor in the Division of Neonatal-Perinatal

Medicine, is the 2006 Physician of the Year for Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital. Woldesenbet joined the UT Medical School faculty more than two years ago.

"I applaud the outstanding accomplishments of Dr. McCarthy and Dr. Woldesenbet and celebrate their recognition by Memorial Hermann," said Jerry Wolinsky, M.D., interim dean of the UT Medical School at Houston.

Memorial Hermann gives the awards to highly regarded physicians who demonstrate patient-centered practices and evidence-driven medicine, among other qualities.

"Dr. McCarthy's leadership and professionalism, as well as his commitment to providing the highest quality patient care, are an inspiration to all who work with him," said Juanita Romans, CEO of Memorial Hermann-TMC.

Brent King, M.D., interim executive vice president and chief operating officer of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston and former chairman of emergency medicine, described McCarthy as "extremely deserving" of the hospital's top honor.

"Patients appreciate him. The residents respect him as a teacher, and faculty respect him as a colleague in every regard," King said. "He's a great leader and an extremely good physician – one of the finest emergency medicine physicians I've ever met."

Jose Garcia, M.D., associate professor and interim director of the Medical School's division of Neonatal-Perinatal Medicine, said Woldesenbet brings compassionate care to Children's Memorial Hermann's smallest patients. That care, Garcia said, is enhanced by Woldesenbet's clinical research and expertise in the role of the placenta in respiratory medicine.

"We all love the work ethic, compassion and naturally kind demeanor of Dr. Woldesenbet," Garcia said. "He is a true asset to our division, to the hospital and to patients and their families."

Craig Cordola, CEO of Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital, said Woldesenbet is dedicated to excellence in all areas of his work.

"Dr. Woldesenbet is truly deserving of this honor," Cordola said. "Within a very short time

on our campus, his approach and demeanor have made an impact on the families he serves as well as the hospital staff he works with."

Woldesenbet was among 11 pediatricians nominated this year for the Physician of the Year award at Children's Memorial Hermann. Out of a field of six physicians, McCarthy was the only emergency medicine specialist nominated for the award at Memorial Hermann-TMC.



Mesfin Woldesenbet, M.D., assistant professor of pediatrics at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston (center), celebrates with his wife and Craig Cordola, CEO of Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital, after winning the 2006 Physician of the Year Award at Children's Memorial Hermann. Photo by Dwight Andrews

Two other UT physicians were recognized for their accomplishments in health care during the annual medical staff meeting. Charles Ericsson, M.D., professor of medicine, and Alan Criswell, M.D., clinical associate professor in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, received Distinguished Doctor awards. ★

UT Researchers to Study Genetic and Environmental Factors in Scleroderma

By Meredith Raine, *Institutional Advancement*

This month, a research team at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston will begin collecting and analyzing skin biopsies to explore an association between scleroderma and silica exposure.

Xiaodong Zhou, M.D., associate professor in the department of Internal Medicine's division of Rheumatology and Clinical Immunogenetics, is leading the first integrative study that examines both genetic and

environmental factors in the development of scleroderma.

The U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command of the Office of the Congressionally Directly Medical Research Programs awarded Zhou a four-year, \$928,125 grant to conduct the research.

Why would the military be interested in this topic? "In several epidemiological studies, silica has been strongly implicated as a trigger

for the development of scleroderma," Zhou said. "Military personnel and more than a million other workers in the United States are at risk for being exposed to this common environmental particle, so it's important to determine the association between silica and scleroderma."

Scleroderma is a chronic, often progressive, autoimmune disease in which the body's immune system attacks its own parts. It can cause thickening and tightening of the skin and, in some cases, causes serious damage to internal organs. It affects about 300,000 people nationwide, mostly women ages 25-55.

Zhou said silica or other environmental exposures might turn on specific genes that lead to the development of scleroderma. He will study the pathways by which silica exposure could cause scleroderma.

Zhou also will examine sensitivity and susceptibility to environmental exposures in individuals with specific genetic backgrounds.

"Identifying the pathways by which this disease begins and progresses could help us develop treatments," Zhou said.

"Determining a person's sensitivity and susceptibility would allow us to identify the

people who need to be most cautious in protecting themselves from silica."

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health estimates that at least 1.7 million U.S. workers are exposed to crystalline silica, which is small enough to be inhaled, in a variety of industries and occupations, including construction, sandblasting and mining.

"Scleroderma is a complex, sometimes devastating, disease," Zhou said. "Right now there is no cure. We hope that with this research we can move a step closer to preventing and providing new therapies for scleroderma."

Volunteers needed

To perform the research, Zhou is collecting skin biopsies from scleroderma patients, as well as healthy men and women. Research nurses use a small needle, Zhou said, to collect a skin sample from the back of the arm.

Volunteers, who will be compensated for their participation in the research, may schedule an appointment at the Clinical Research Unit at Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center. For information, call 713-500-6900. ★

CALENDAR

JANUARY 15 - FEBRUARY 14

For the most complete UT Health Science Center at Houston event information, please visit the online calendars link at <http://www.uthouston.edu>.

January

15 – Martin Luther King Day (full closure)

17 – UT Wellness Fair, **10 a.m.-2 p.m.**, Medical School Leather Lounge and basement area.

February

3 – Preventive Cardiology Forum XVII: Prevention of Acute Coronary Syndromes and Stroke, **7:30 a.m.-1 p.m.**, Medical School Building, Room 3.001. It is free, and breakfast will be provided. To register, visit http://www.utcmce.net/Registration/Event_Snapshot.asp?EventID=884 or click on the date in the online calendar link noted at the beginning of this calendar.

9 – Health Care Safety Net Initiatives Conference: Policy and Performance, **8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.**, School of Public Health. More information: <http://www.sph.uth.tmc.edu/hsrc/>.

13 – Nanohealth brunch meeting features "Nanoparticles as Intracellular Targets to Produce RF-Induced Thermal Destruction of Cancer Cells" by Steven A. Curley, M.D., of the UT M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, **12-1:30 p.m.**, Faye S. Sarofim Research Building, The Brown Foundation Institute of Molecular Medicine for the Prevention of Human Diseases, Beth Robertson Auditorium. For more information, visit <http://www.nanohealthalliance.org>. Contact: Jason Sakamoto, Ph.D., 713-500-2466 or Jason.Sakamoto@uth.tmc.edu.



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DEADLINES

Submit information to be considered for publication in *The Leader* by the 15th of the month one month prior to the desired time of publication. Requests for feature articles require a longer lead time and will receive strategic consideration. Send electronic information in Word format (no PDFs or posters) and digital photos as unedited, high-resolution images at 300 dpi or better. E-mail to Pamela.Lewis@uth.tmc.edu. Include a contact name, phone number and e-mail address. Mail hard copy to *The Leader*, c/o Pamela Lewis, Office of Institutional Advancement, University Center Tower, 1200, or fax to 713-500-3037. For information regarding *The Leader*, call Pamela Lewis, 713-500-3040.

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