

Medical School to Launch Major Heart-Lung Research Program

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UCSD, School of Medicine NEWS RELEASE

A National Heart Institute Program Project grant of just under \$5-million has been received by the UCSD School of Medicine it was announced today by Dr. Clifford Grobstein, Vice Chancellor for Medicine and Biological Sciences and Dean of the School of Medicine.

Under the research program, which will be projected over a five-year period, an intensive study will be made of heart and lung diseases as well as the normal function of the cardiopulmonary systems. The national significance of this program is revealed in part by recent figures showing that approximately 45,000,000 Americans suffer from heart and respiratory diseases. In 1967, deaths from heart and circulatory diseases reached one million nationally and 86,600 in California. Of the California deaths, 3,122 occurred in San Diego County. Chronic respiratory diseases were a factor in or direct cause of about 88,000 deaths during 1967 and estimates indicate that a probable 100,000 Americans will have died prematurely in 1968 from lung cancer, chronic bronchitis, and pulmonary emphysema.

Dr. Grobstein commented that the program project, entitled Cardiopulmonary Physiology and Pathophysiology, will be carried out by an unusually distinguished faculty team. Dr. Eugene Brounwald, Chairman of the Department of Medicine, serves as Principal Investigator, and the members of the program's Executive Committee are Dr. Averill A. Liebow, Chairman of the Department of Pathology, Dr. John Ross, Jr., Director of the Cardiovascular Division, and Dr. Daniel Steinberg, Director of the Division of Metabolic Diseases, all of the UCSD School of Medicine.

Dr. Grobstein said, "The program project will take advantage of the opportunity presented by the new medical school to cross traditional departmental lines and create a fully inter-disciplinary research unit. The research team will draw membership from the departments of medicine, pathology, pediatrics, and surgery thus making the heart-lung study one of the major thrusts of the new school. This inter-departmental structure parallels a basic philosophy of the new school under which students are trained by a faculty spread throughout the university rather than one confined within the school of medicine itself.

"The feasibility of this research approach is in part attributable to the close working relationships which existed for many of the participants prior to their joining UCSD. The scientists who will be pooling their talents for the duration of the program have already demonstrated an ability to work together effectively in settings similar to those of the program project.

In all, there will be thirteen senior investigators engaged in the program. Each of them is a clinician with training in the basic sciences and, in addition, with an orientation toward problems of the patient with heart or lung disease. The investigative techniques they use will range from anatomic, electromicroscopic, biochemical, and mathematical to experimental physiologic, clinical, and surgical.

In describing some of the goals of the five-year program, Dr. Braunwald said, "We hope to establish a better understanding of and approach to the treatment of patients with congenital heart diseases and high blood pressure in the lungs. We will be looking for answers to such growing and fundamentally serious problems as those relating to pulmonary emphysema, coronary artery diseases and congestive heart failure.

"Quite possibly, we may also develop a better prosthetic heart valve for treatment of valvular heart disease. Another potential advance may be derived from an increased understanding of drugs for treatment of infants with congestive heart failure.

"Because our efforts will be coordinated with the University Hospital's Myocardial Infarction Research Unit, we hope to develop a major theoretical underpinning of new knowledge which will directly reduce mortality from the world's number one killer."

Dr. Braunwald, a graduate of NYU's School of Medicine, came to UCSD in May, 1968, having spent 13 years at the National Heart Institute, most recently as its Clinical Director. He was at the same time Clinical Professor of Medicine at Georgetown University's School of Medicine.

Dr. Liebow received his medical training at Yale where he was John Slade Ely Professor of Pathology from 1957 until April of 1968 when he joined the UCSD faculty.

Dr. Ross studied medicine at Cornell and from 1962 until June of 1968, when he came to UCSD, was with the National Heart Institute as Chief of the Cardiovascular Diagnostic section.

Dr. Steinberg is a medical graduate of Wayne University College of Medicine and also holds a Ph.D. from Harvard Medical School. For seven years before accepting his present post at UCSD he was Chief of the Laboratory of Metabolism at the National Heart Institute.

The remaining senior investigators are: Drs. Colin Bloor, Nina S. Braunwald, Charles B. Carrington, James W. Covell, Dean L. Franklin, William F. Friedman, James H. Gault, Peter E. Pool, and Burton E. Sobel.