

## **Dr. J. Edwin Seegmiller wins 1969 Philip Hench Award**

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### UCSD PHYSICIAN WINS HENCH AWARD

Dr. J. Edwin Seegmiller of the School of Medicine, University of California, San Diego, has won the 1969 Philip Hench Award for his outstanding contributions in the field of rheumatology and arthritis. Dr. Seegmiller is professor of medicine and director of the Division of Rheumatology at UCSD.

Presentation will take place in Washington, D. C., at a special "Awards Hour" ceremony on November 18 at the Sheraton-Park Hotel. Given in memory of the first physician to use cortisone in the treatment of arthritis, the award consists of a bronze plaque and a token honorarium of \$1000.

Dr. Seegmiller's eminence in his field is the result of an interest which has continued since early in his career when he spent a year as a visiting scientist-investigator with Dr. DeWitt Stetten, Jr., at the Public Health Research Institute of the City of New York. Here he learned the use of heavy isotopes in broadening the studies that might be performed in human subjects. This work involved investigation of abnormalities of purine metabolism in gout.

Prior to accepting his present appointment at the UCSD Medical School, Dr. Seegmiller was with the National Institutes of Health where he held the post of chief of the section on human biochemical genetics and was assistant scientific director of the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases. His present recognition reflects the success achieved by him and his colleagues at NIH; this work provided the basis of the award which is given annually to an outstanding physician in the federal medical service. The award is made jointly by the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States and the pharmaceutical house of Merck Sharp & Dohme.

During the past decade basic research has brought about great advances in therapy and in understanding the problems of gouty arthritis. Many of these new insights come from the work of Dr. Seegmiller, who pointed out that developments in his field will be widely beneficial because they relate to enzymatic defects. He said that these hereditary biochemical abnormalities produce a number of human diseases.

Both the theoretical and the practical advances made by the Seegmiller laboratory researchers point toward possible new hope for arthritics. These scientists have found evidence of a mechanism by which acute attacks of gouty arthritis may be propagated. They have also found an explanation for the action of colchicine, a drug which has been used since the fifth century, for the termination of acute attacks of gout. Colchicine is doubly interesting to the non-scientist because not only is it an ancient drug, it is one that comes from an unexpected source--the autumn crocus. Now, almost all patients can look forward to a full productive life without serious disability from the disease provided it is diagnosed promptly and adequate medical supervision is maintained.

Dr. Seegmiller's long-standing interest in purine metabolism has also led him to investigate a sex-linked, childhood disorder leading to compulsive self-mutilation and often classed as cerebral palsy.

A descendant of pioneers and the ninth child of a Mormon farmer and rancher, Dr. Seegmiller was born in St. George, Utah. He was granted his M.D. degree at the University of Chicago where he was recipient of a Prather Fellowship and later won a Research Fellowship in biochemistry. A part of his early work at the National Institutes of Health was in the laboratory of Dr. Arthur Kornberg, a Nobel Laureate.

Dr. Seegmiller is married and the father of four children. The family makes its home in La Jolla.