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UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI MEDICAL CENTER LEADS ALZHEIMER'S FIGHT WITH MAJOR NEW RESEARCH CENTER

- MIND Center to use 20 years of unique research to identify early causes of Alzheimer's and dementia.

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JACKSON, Miss. – Supporters of a new research center combating Alzheimer's disease and dementia at the University of Mississippi Medical Center have announced a \$9 million campaign aimed at raising private funds to support its work.

The creation of the MIND Center (Memory Impairment and Neurodegenerative Dementia Research) was announced at a press conference Tuesday at the Medical Center. UMMC and four collaborating academic medical centers have received a \$26 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to identify risk factors for Alzheimer's and related forms of cognitive decline.

The multi-year study, building on clinical data collected from 16,000 patient participants over 20 years, is expected to give researchers a unique window on the early physiological changes that might eventually culminate in Alzheimer's.

UMMC's seminal role in the study places the MIND Center among the leading institutions seeking to understand the disease, said Dr. James E. Keeton, vice chancellor for health affairs and dean of the School of Medicine.

"The MIND Center will pool our considerable expertise in dementia and Alzheimer's research. The discoveries made here will translate into better methods of caring for people who suffer from this dreaded disease," Keeton.

"Establishing the MIND Center will also help the University of Mississippi Medical Center continue training new generations of health-care and research professionals to take on the challenges of diseases such as Alzheimer's."

Dr. Thomas Mosley, an internationally recognized expert in brain aging and dementia, will direct the center, Keeton said. Mosley, 50, of Ridgeland, holds a doctorate in clinical neuropsychology and has a two-decade record of obtaining multi-million dollar scientific grants to support his research.

The fundraising effort is supported by an Advisory Board chaired by former U.S. Ambassador to Portugal John N. Palmer. The board also includes honorary chairmen Robert C. Khayat, Chancellor Emeritus of the University of Mississippi, and former Mississippi Gov. William Winter, along with a number of other prominent Mississippians.

Palmer called the MIND Center a rare opportunity for Mississippi to build a world-class center for biomedical research.

"As I have learned more about Tom's work, it has become increasingly clear what a tremendous resource we have here and what it means for our understanding of the brain," Palmer said.

"Most studies of Alzheimer's disease have focused on what the brain looks like at the end point of the disease, but we know that the brain begins to change long before symptoms occur, perhaps as early as middle age," Mosley said. "What's unique about this study is that it gives us the ability to look back in time, so to speak, to determine what factors from midlife predict cognitive decline and dementia in late life."

Mosley is collaborating with a coalition of dozens of scientist and physicians at institutions around the world. In addition to UMMC, the principal study sites are Johns Hopkins University, Wake Forest University, the University of Minnesota and the Mayo Clinic. (See attached list of all ARIC NCS collaborators.)

With an unprecedented shift to an elderly population on the horizon, incidence of Alzheimer's Disease will increase dramatically, underscoring the need for the MIND Center, Keeton said.

"As the state's only academic medical center, UMMC has a responsibility to meet this challenge head on," Keeton said. "The MIND Center gives us the opportunity not only to address a major public health concern, but to be a national leader in this increasingly important field."

For more information on the MIND Center fundraising campaign, contact the UMMC Office of Development at <http://giveto.umc.edu> or (601) 984-2300.

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The University of Mississippi Medical Center, located in Jackson, is the state's only academic medical center. University of Mississippi Health Care represents the clinical programs of the Medical Center and includes University Hospitals and Health System and University Physicians, the faculty group practice. UMMC encompasses five health science schools, including medicine, nursing, health related professions, dentistry and graduate studies, as well as the site where University of Mississippi pharmacy students do their clinical training. The Medical Center's threefold mission is to educate tomorrow's health-care professionals, conduct innovative research to improve human health, and to provide the highest quality care available to the state's citizens. A major goal of the Medical Center is the improvement of the health of Mississippians and the elimination of health disparities. For more information, contact the Division of Public Affairs at 601-984-1100 or visit us on the Web at <http://info.umc.edu/>.