

## Oilman believes in drug

**United Press International**  
**HOUSTON** — Because he believes every American has watched a family member win or lose a fight with cancer, a wealthy Texas oilman is quietly raising \$20 million for interferon research.

"My mother died of lymphoma," said Leon Davis, 61, from his office in the smoked-glass Pennzoil Tower. "Interferon has been successful in the treatment of lymphoma. My uncles and aunts have had it (cancer). It certainly has hit our family."

If Americans die in greater numbers from heart disease, they never-

theless fear cancer more. Cancer awareness, high for years, has intensified with recent reports of the progress of some patients treated with interferon, a substance discovered 23 years ago but whose amino acid composition remains a mystery.

The body secretes tiny amounts of interferon when infected by certain types of viruses. Researchers must extract it from living cells and there are four known different kinds of interferon.

Scientists doing research on the substance stress that its use still is strictly experimental — that no one

is claiming it is a cure for cancer, simply that it seems to have some effect on some cancers, and that its side effects are still largely unknown.

One of the nation's leading interferon researchers, Dr. Jordan Guterman of M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute, said every national news article on interferon prompts 50,000 calls to physicians from patients and relatives of cancer victims.

To oilman Davis, the problem is "a question of money."

"Up to the discovery and clinical use of interferon, if a man had a bil-

lion dollars he could go to the finest doctor in the world and say, 'cure me,' and if the doctor was honest, he'd have to give his money back because there was no hope," Davis said.

However, scientists say it isn't simply a case of "if we had money, we could buy interferon." There is more money available to buy interferon than there is interferon to buy.

If Davis and oilman acquaintance Roy Huffington are successful in raising \$20 million through the non-profit Interferon Foundation in the next two years, that would be more

than three times the \$5.8 million the American Cancer Society has allocated to acquire interferon in two years.

"The \$5.8 million has not been expended for the simple reason that the interferon is so hard to come by," said spokesman Charles Dahle of the Cancer Society's single largest research commitment. "You can't get it."

But Davis and Dahle agree money might prime the interferon pump.

"One psychological reason for having money in the pot is to show a market is there to spur production so

that the stuff becomes available," Dahle said.

"The foundation is geared primarily to give money so interferon can be purchased," Davis said. "We're trying to synthesize it. That's the process the pharmaceutical people are all doing. A huge race is on to see who can do it first and we're sure it will be done."

The scientists report interferon has some effect on some kinds of cancers, causing reduction in tumor masses in certain cases, but the effects are not fully known.

## Potts changes his mind again

**United Press International**  
**ATLANTA** — Convicted killer Jack Potts, who decided on the eve of his execution last week to appeal his death sentence, has abruptly changed his mind again.

His attorneys say he wants to die because he can't bear the cruelty of his guards who allegedly smashed a mirror given to him by his mother. In a handwritten plea to a federal judge, he asked the appeal be stopped and his execution be carried out.

U.S. District Judge William C. O'Kelley had scheduled a hearing Tuesday to hear personally from Potts, 35, why he is again refusing appeals — "so that the court may determine his competence and whether or not his action... is freely and voluntarily given, with full knowledge and understanding of the consequences of his actions."

In his letter to O'Kelley, who issued a stay of execution for Potts last week some 11 hours before he was to die, Potts said he had agreed to appeal only to "satisfy my brother whom I love very much." His brother, John Potts, was one of his visitors last Wednesday when he

dramatically changed his mind and signed a paper saying he wanted to appeal.

Potts begged O'Kelley to allow a new execution date to be set "immediately and most of all, let me die while in a state of grace." Potts converted to Roman Catholicism in prison.

Potts, assuring the judge he was "of sound mind and body," said he was refusing the help of attorneys Millard Farmer and Andrea Young of the Team Defense Project, and he would not meet with reporters again as he had done several times before his scheduled electrocution date.

Farmer said Potts' change of mind was the result of harassment he has suffered since he was returned to a fourth-floor cell at the Georgia State Prison at Reidsville.

The Atlanta attorney claimed guards broke a mirror that was given to Potts by his mother and "destroyed his personal belongings."

Farmer, who in recent months had pleaded with Potts repeatedly to change his mind and seek an appeal, said he would not stand in the way of the condemned man's wishes.

## Microwaves' effects being probed by UT

**United Press International**  
**SAN ANTONIO** — Research has begun at the University of Texas Health Science Center into the effects of radio frequency radiation, such as is produced in a microwave oven.

Along with the many benefits of man's harnessing radiation for use in the home and in communications has come concern about potential effects of radiation on human bodies, especially on genetic material — the DNA — of cells.

Although the researchers emphasize that microwave ovens are carefully manufactured and sealed, their studies will determine what would happen if one of the ovens hypothetically "sprang a leak."

The Air Force is funding the \$57,000 research project by Dr. Martin L. Meltz, assistant professor of radiology, to study the effects of microwaves on the DNA repair process in human cells.

Meltz said he believes that DNA's normal ability to repair itself when damaged may be affected in the presence of radio frequency radiation, specifically that energy absorbed by a cell may cause microscopic heating and vibrations that interfere with the DNA repair process.

"Damage to the DNA in reproductive cells, if not repaired correctly, could cause birth defects in future generations," he said. "Damage to DNA in other cells in the body, if not repaired correctly, might lead to cancer."

As the first step in his experiments, Meltz said he would use ultraviolet light to damage DNA in normal human cells grown in a test tube. Then, while the cells normally would be repairing the damage, he will expose them to microwaves.

The rate and amount of repair then will be measured to determine whether microwaves have affected the cells' ability to repair their own DNA.

While the Air Force is interested in the effects of radio frequency radiation for operational reasons, there also is concern because of the proposed use of microwaves in satellite power systems designed to bring energy back to earth from space.

Meltz said the likelihood of people being exposed to microwaves is increasing. In addition to ovens, microwave generators are used in communications equipment, radar and medical diathermy units.

"Scientists have tried for years to detect possible microwave radiation damage at levels not producing measurable heating," he said. "In cases like these, it's 'innocent until proven guilty.'"

Meltz is conducting the research in collaboration with Dr. David Erwin, a research physiologist at the School of Aerospace Medicine, Brooks Air Force Base.

Maintenance of human cells and preparation of chemical solutions are done at the Health Science Center. Damage to the cells by ultraviolet light and their subsequent exposure to microwaves are performed at Brooks because of the base's outstanding microwave irradiation facilities, which Meltz described as "among the best in the world."

## Work boat accident caused fire on offshore platform

**United Press International**  
**NEW ORLEANS** — Marathon Oil Co. officials said it will take several days to determine the cause for sure, but the Coast Guard said a workboat accident is to blame for a fire aboard a multimillion dollar offshore oil and gas rig.

The fire forced 42 crew members to evacuate the rig and seven were hurt, none seriously.

Cmdr. Stewart Walker, a Coast Guard investigator, Monday said the fire started Sunday after the supply boat Gulf Fleet No. 10 bumped into a pipeline feeding natural gas from the platform to shore.

The fire, which burned more than six hours, scorched and twisted the 75-foot by 110-foot steel rig. Marathon operated the rig, located in 220 feet of water 200 miles southwest of New Orleans.

Work crews and investigators boarded the rig Monday. Wes Westgaard, a Marathon spokesman, said the company would not confirm the Coast Guard report.

"The assessment process will continue for two to three days," he said. "We're still trying to determine the cause."

The upper levels of the rig were tilted sideways by the accident.

"It was involved pretty heavy with fire," Westgaard said. "A lot of steel has been melted and it is sagging. We don't think it could fall over."

Walker said the Coast Guard did not know if the supply boat was approaching the rig or departing when the accident happened. The boat moved away after the fire started and was undamaged.

"Apparently the vessel hit and ruptured a gas transmission line," he said. "The gas escaped and was ignited from the stacks on the vessel."

Westgaard said emergency equipment sealed the 24 oil and gas wells on the platform.

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