

# Local

## Interferon — cancer cure?

**Editor's Note:** This is the second of a two-part series on the work of the Wadley Institutes of Molecular Medicine, to which the blood collected in the Aggie Blood Drive is sent.

By DANIEL PUCKETT  
Battalion Staff

DALLAS — Even if interferon can cure cancer, its cost may prohibit its widespread use for some time, says the head of a Dallas research institute.

The president of the Wadley Institutes of Molecular Medicine, Dr. Norwood O. Hill, said cancer clinics around the world are hav-

ing great success in treating cancer with interferon.

Although still in the early testing stage, the drug seems effective not only in the treatment of tumors, but also in the treatment of many viral diseases.

However, he said, interferon is not a drug that can be produced in quantity as other drugs are; instead, it must be produced in small amounts through a complex process.

Interferon occurs naturally in the blood of humans and many animals, but in such minute quantities that it does not combat cancer, he said. Scientists must stimulate production of interferon by blood cells and then concentrate it to obtain usable doses of the drug.

Since the interferon produced by animals is ineffective in hu-

mans, only human blood can be used in the process and obtaining that blood is easier said than done, he said.

Most of the blood used by Wadley cancer researchers is obtained from the Wadley Central Blood Bank. However, the blood is difficult and expensive to obtain, despite the blood bank's numerous blood drives.

Actual production of interferon also is expensive, said Sal Comparini, interferon supervisor at Wadley's Leland Fikes Research Institute.

Comparini said cancer patients receive a daily dose of interferon, which requires from two to 32 pints of blood to produce. Over the course of treatment, a patient, on average, receives interferon made from more than 800 pints of blood.

In other words, all the blood from this fall's Aggie Blood Drive, nearly 2,500 pints, could have produced only enough interferon for three cancer patients.

The production of interferon for one cancer patient takes about two days and the cooperation of several teams of technicians, Comparini said.

The blood is first separated into its components, and the white blood cells sent to the production lab. Then the cells are suspended in a nutrient culture made out of chicken blood and Sendai virus is added to the mixture.

The virus causes the cells to produce interferon in an attempt to destroy it. After overnight incubation the interferon is harvested from the culture, concentrated and quickly refrigerated.

A minimum daily dose of interferon costs about \$120, Comparini said, but for some cancer patients, one day's dosage of interferon can cost as much as \$1,600.

And an entire course of interferon treatment usually costs about \$40,000, he said.

Until researchers can discover a way to produce interferon more cheaply, interferon will remain among the most expensive drugs, he said.

In Wadley's department of molecular genetics, researchers are now trying to find a way to manufacture the drug cheaply and in bulk, Dr. Arthur P. Bollon, department chairman said.

The best hope is through genetic tailoring of bacteria, Bollon said. Once this is done, scientists will be able to increase the supply and reduce the cost of the drug, he said.

Although researchers have several prospects for the synthesis of interferon, they have not yet been able to produce it, Bollon said. The researchers already know what methods they must use; all that remains is applying those methods until they produce a result, he said. A result that could take a long time.



Dr. Norwood O. Hill holds a beaker of interferon at the Wadley Blood Institute.

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# TWO HEAVY HITTERS TOUCH BASES ON BATS, BALLS, AND BEER.

**BOOG POWELL** (Former American Baseball Great): Koichi here has been giving me a new angle on baseball. It seems the game's a little different in Japan.

**KOICHI NUMAZAWA** (Former Japanese Baseball Great): そう、例えばフィールドが小さめですね。

**BOOG:** That's right. The field is

smaller over there.  
**KOICHI:** つまり、ショートで小さな日本人の体格に合わせたんですよ。

**BOOG:** Well, now that you mentioned it, I guess you guys are kinda smaller. Does that mean you drink Lite Beer 'cause it's less filling?

**KOICHI:** いやー、おいしいから飲むんですよ。

**BOOG:** Tastes great? That's why I drink it, too! I guess we have a lot more in common than I thought.

**KOICHI:** その通り! どうです、日本の野球チームに入りませんか。

**BOOG:** Me? I'm too big to play on a Japanese team.

**KOICHI:** そんなことないですよ、ショートに最適ですよ。

**BOOG:** Shortstop?! Very funny.

## Murphey to perform tonight after Bonfire

By NANCY WEATHERLEY  
Battalion Staff

In the bonfire's afterglow, Michael Murphey — Mr. Wildfire himself — will perform tonight at 9 in G. Rolie White Coliseum.

Presented by the MSC Base and Town Hall committees, Murphey has been called a "cosmic cowboy, a real country rocker with a strong satirical thrust in his earlier songs," by Rolling Stone magazine.

Murphey, a native Texan, is now living in New Mexico. His music appeals to many musical tastes, including both country and rock preferences.

Some of Murphey's best known

songs include "Geronimo's Gal," off the Cosmic Cowboy Souvenirs album, "Wildfire," "Carolina in the Pines," from Blue Sky/Night Thunder album.

Recently, Murphey made film debut in the movie "The Country." The screenplay based on his song by the same name. According to a press release, background for the film came from his childhood experiences on a Texas farm.

"I wanted to show both sides of the coin — the real Texas life today," Murphey said. "I pray and knock it."

Murphey and his band, Great American Honky Tonk Band, are no strangers to the area, having appeared at the Bonfire seven times on the Texas State University campus.

Tickets are still available at MSC Box Office for \$2.50, \$4.00 and \$4.75.

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