

# **\$2 million earmarked for UT bioresearch**

## **To fund nanotech science to detect diseases before symptoms appear**

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WASHINGTON -- The \$2 million Defense appropriations earmark for the University of Tennessee Health Science Center announced Thursday night will underwrite research in nanotechnology for detecting infectious diseases like tularemia, anthrax and bird flu, a UT official said Friday.

Dr. Robert R. Caudle, vice chancellor of health center affairs, said the basic research is aimed at detecting how different individuals respond differently to various infectious agents at the genetic and molecular level in order to detect them before victims show symptoms of illness.

Ultimately, the work is designed to both detect and then find therapies and vaccines to ward off infections, he said. Caudle said it is likely the lab will seek ways for rapidly detecting known pathogens such as E. coli, multiple-drug-resistant tuberculosis, bird flu and the causes of hemorrhagic fevers.

Its practical benefit to the Department of Defense, according to the earmark request, is to have "a scientifically sound mechanism to quickly identify infectious diseases and preempt and treat ... highly contagious infections." The basic research would result in the creation of biosensors for diagnostic and triaging purposes.

Memphis is the future home of one of 13 regional biocontainment labs around the country where this kind of basic research is conducted. The lab is under construction on the site of the former Baptist Memorial Hospital on Union and is scheduled to be in operation by next summer.

U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen, D-Tenn., sought the earmark for his district from U.S. Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa., chairman of the Defense Appropriations subcommittee. Cohen supported Murtha in his losing bid to be named majority leader in January. The funding request still has to survive a House-Senate conference committee.

Caudle credited Cohen for the funding.

"Congressman Cohen was instrumental in shepherding this support through the House Appropriations Committee," Caudle said in a follow-up e-mail. "He has been consistently a strong supporter of this research at the UT Health Science Center and the growing Memphis biotech industry."

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