

We've Got Your Number

Numbered Signs Point the Way to TMC

Navigating the Texas Medical Center just got easier, thanks to the installation of 11-foot-high numbered signs that help visitors "know where to go."

The giant numbers mark key "points of entry" to the Texas Medical Center campus. Each numbered entry represents the easiest approach to one or more TMC buildings, especially buildings in high-traffic areas.

"The Texas Medical Center is the world's largest medical center, and getting around can be intimidating, especially for first-time visitors. These signs make the experience easier," said Bob Stott, executive vice president of planning and development for the Texas Medical Center.

The larger-than-life digits contain internal lighting, making them easily

visible, day or night.

The project is in its early stages, and a total of four signs are currently in place. When completed, 29 numerals will ring the exterior of the Texas Medical Center campus, providing visual cues for visitors arriving from all directions.

To assess the most direct route to the Texas Medical Center from any location, visit <http://www.maps.tmc.edu>. ■

NAVIGATING BY NUMBER—Bob Stott, executive vice president of planning and development for the Texas Medical Center, inspects one of the new numerals that direct visitors into the TMC campus. (Photo by Ester Fant)



New Treatment Appears to Halt Progression of Multiple Sclerosis

By ROSS TOMLIN
Baylor College of Medicine

A new treatment for multiple sclerosis shows promise for preventing brain damage that characterizes the debilitating disease, say neurologists at Baylor College of Medicine.

"In the clinical trials, the development of new lesions in the brain was controlled in almost 90 percent of all cases," said Victor Rivera, M.D., professor of neurology at Baylor and medical director of the Maxine Mesinger Multiple Sclerosis Clinic at Baylor and The Methodist Hospital. "None of the patients have had any relapse or attack since we started the trial."

The promising new treatment is a drug named Tysabri (its scientific name is natalizumab). Approved by the Food and Drug Administration last November for certain multiple sclerosis patients, Tysabri is made by the clinical trial's sponsor, pharmaceutical company Biogen Idec.

An international two-year study is currently analyzing Tysabri, which prevents T-cells – immune cells that discover and destroy foreign invaders in the body – from escaping the walls of blood vessels in the brain. Unlike other MS drugs, Tysabri modulates the body's immune system from within these vessels and effectively prevents lesions from forming.

Before the FDA's approval of Tysabri, MS patients' recourse was interferons and Glatiramer Acetate, medications in use since 1993 that control exacerbations in about one-third of patients with relapsing forms of MS. While interferons usually take several months before producing the desired effect and attempt to contain the development of lesions from outside blood vessels in the brain, Tysabri goes into effect within six weeks upon being administered intravenously once a month.

Rivera, who serves as principal investigator of the Baylor site, one of three sites in Texas, said many patients had problems tolerating interferons – both the side effects and intramuscular injections, which are sometimes daily or every other day. Many would cease taking their medications.

"Without any form of treatment, about half of all patients with relapsing forms of MS would enter a secondary progressive phase, where the condition gets much worse and there is no more remission," Rivera said. ■

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