

UT Southwestern Medical Center

Thornton named recipient of 2016 Watson Award

June 9, 2016

To the UT Southwestern Community:

It gives me great pleasure to announce that Dr. William Laurence “Larry” Thornton, Professor of Psychiatry, who holds the McKenzie Foundation Chair in Psychiatry II, has been selected to receive the 2016 Patricia and William L. Watson, Jr., M.D., Award for Excellence in Clinical Medicine.

The Watson Award was established in 2009 through a generous gift from Dr. and Mrs. Watson to create an annual opportunity for the campus community to recognize a UT Southwestern faculty physician who exemplifies excellence in clinical care.

Dr. Thornton is well known throughout the UT Southwestern community and is highly respected for his expertise, compassion, and creative approaches to patient care. He is widely regarded as a physician deeply committed to practicing medicine as an art, as well as a science.

In the words of one of his nominators, he has an extraordinary ability “to sense just the right words, tone, and body language to use to establish a healing relationship with patients.” Colleagues consistently indicate their respect and admiration for him by referring their own family members and friends to him, and they regularly consult with him on their most challenging patients.

A graduate of UT Dallas, Dr. Thornton received his M.D. from UT Southwestern Medical School in 1987 and remained here as an intern and resident in psychiatry. Upon completion of his training in 1991, he was invited to join the faculty, and he has spent the past 25 years as a member of the UT Southwestern community. He pursued psychoanalytic training at the Dallas Psychoanalytic Center in 1998, and he has been associated with that institution as well as UT Southwestern in the years since then.

His stature as a clinician stems in part from the depth and breadth of his expertise, along with his creativity and effectiveness in utilizing treatments ranging from psychotherapy to neuromodulation to psychopharmacology. He has innovatively applied both standard and alternative treatments in trying to help seriously mentally ill, treatment-resistant patients, and he has participated in numerous clinical research projects designed to discover new, effective treatments for patients with severe mood disorders.

In addition to his clinical reputation, Dr. Thornton is highly regarded as a teacher and has received Outstanding Teacher awards from medical students, residents, and fellows year after year. He also has been an exemplary model for them in the way he works with nurse practitioners, social workers, and psychologists as important members of the care team.

The Watson Award will be presented to Dr. Thornton this fall, in conjunction with the Watson Lecture, which is given by a national health care leader. The date of the award/lecture event and the name of the 2016 Watson Lecturer will be announced in the coming months.

For now, please join me in congratulating Dr. Thornton for being selected to receive the 2016 Watson Award.

I also want to thank Dr. Willis Maddrey for chairing the Watson Award Selection Committee and the faculty who served as committee members to consider the many deserving candidates nominated by colleagues across the Medical Center.

Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.
President, UT Southwestern Medical Center