School of Medicine internist wins $1 million grant

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A University of Nevada School of Medicine faculty member has been awarded more than $1 million for his study of cardiovascular patients and how factors such as as age, gender, family history, pre-existing conditions and treatment affect their ability to benefit from treatment.

Phillip H. Goodman, M.D., an associate professor in the school's Department of Internal Medicine, was awarded the grant by the Public Health Service's Agency for Health Care Policy and Research. The three-year study will develop new computer techniques, called neural networks, that mimic human brain pattern recognition to discover important patterns in hospital data bases.

By studying computer data on more than 100,000 patients throughout the country, Dr. Goodman hopes to use the computer to assess which patients will do well and which will do poorly, helping physicians identify those patients who need the most aggressive treatment. "This will allow us to squeeze more information from existing data collections than we can with traditional statistical techniques. We may identify combinations of risk factors for patients that need special medical attention, and others that warrent clinical trials to determine the best outcome."

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Dr. Goodman will have priority access for the next three years to data on cardiovascular patients from Medicare, Duke University, and the Cleveland Clinic as well as from the national data base of the Veterans Administration.

Three other medical school researchers from internal medicine will be working with Dr. Goodman: Associate Professor and Cardiologist Robert J. Bryg, M.D.; Assistant Professor Harry Burke, M.D., Ph.D.; and Assistant Professor David Rosen, Ph.D. Additionally, Dwight Egbert, Ph.D., University of Nevada professor of electrical engineering, will be involved in the project.

Washoe Medical Center, where most of the research will be conducted, supported pilot research that led to the grant.

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