

## NEWS RELEASE

---

### UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE



Public Relations Office  
Savitt Medical Sciences Building /356  
Reno, Nevada 89557-0046  
(702) 784-6003  
FAX: (702) 784-6096

Public Relations Office  
2040 W. Charleston Blvd., Suite #503  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89102-2386  
(702) 383-2638  
FAX: (702) 486-3582

*FOR THE GOOD HEALTH OF NEVADA*

---

#### Med school researcher earns MERIT award

Lynne Williams, medical school information  
January 23, 1995

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A University of Nevada School of Medicine researcher has been accorded MERIT award status by the National Advisory Allergy and Infectious Diseases Council. The award went to Thomas R. Kozel, Ph.D., professor and chairman of the school's Department of Microbiology, and is "provided to support the principal scientific endeavor of an investigator who has demonstrated superior competence and outstanding productivity."

This is a singular honor because it is not a grant for which researchers can apply. Instead, the Council identifies and selects awardees based on a career of excellence.

"The School of Medicine is indeed proud of Dr. Kozel's accomplishments," says Iain Buxton, Pharm.D, assistant dean for research. "He has been a leading researcher in the area of infectious diseases in immune-compromised patients. The merit award system at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is specifically designed to identify researchers who have been continuously funded to study a problem of significant medical importance. Merit awardees will also have frequently served as the scientific chairperson of peer review study sections for the NIH Division of

-MORE-

Research Grants, a significant accomplishment in and of itself," Dr. Buxton adds.

"Dr. Kozel has served as chairperson of the Bacteriology and Micology Study Section (the group that reviews scientific studies of bacterial and fungal diseases). There are very few Merit awardees in the nation, and many medical schools view their degree of excellence based on having faculty of this caliber."

Dr. Kozel's research is of particular importance because of his work on *Cryptococcus neoformans*, a fungus that attacks people who have compromised immune systems, such as AIDS patients and patients on chemotherapy. Studies in the Kozel laboratory attempt to understand how and why fungi cause disease in immunocompromised patients. Additional studies examine new means for diagnosis and treatment of fungal infections.

Dr. Kozel's work has taken on added importance in recent years, as deaths from fungal agents have taken an alarming upturn. *Science* magazine reported in its December 9 issue that in the decade from 1980 to 1990, the percentage of fungal infections in hospitals nearly doubled. To add to the problem, many of these fungi are showing increased resistance to traditional drugs, prompting a renewed interest in finding new ways to treat and prevent fungal infections.

Dr. Kozel joined the school's faculty in 1971, and last spring was elected as a Fellow of the American Academy of Microbiology. The American Academy of Microbiology is a division of the American Society for Microbiology, which is the largest single-discipline professional society in the life sciences in the world. Fewer than five percent of the members are Fellows. Dr. Kozel was the University of Nevada, Reno Foundation Research Professor, 1984-87, and was named Outstanding Basic Science Professor by the Class of 1982.