



The University of Texas
Rio Grande Valley™

DR. WILLIAM HEAD

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Dr. William Head

Inspiring Innovative Minds

Dr. William C. Head was the first surgeon to perform a total joint replacement in the state of Texas, and his surgical methods are still considered best practices to this day. Beyond his medical expertise, to those that have crossed paths with Dr. Head, he is an inspiration and a guiding example of generosity and altruism. He is an innovator, truly inspiring the next generation of physicians.

Born and raised in rural Arkansas, Dr. Head's introduction to patient care was at the local pharmacy. The pharmacy served as the secondary point of care for his small community, which only had one physician. The pharmacist would listen to descriptions of ailments and prescribe the medication needed. As Dr. Head worked with the pharmacist, he became adept with local remedies as a teenager. He then decided to pursue a career in medicine.

During college Dr. Head joined the U.S. Navy Reserve. After graduating from medical school at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, he started general surgery residency training at UT Southwestern in Dallas, Texas. At that time the Vietnam War was underway and medical personnel were in high demand; Dr. Head was called into active duty—he spent most of his time during the war with the Marines, some of which was overseas. Upon his return, Dr. Head completed his orthopedic surgery residency training at UT Southwestern. After receiving fellowship training in reconstructive surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts, he continued in the Harvard program on the faculty at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital for two more years. Following that, he returned to Dallas and started his own orthopedic practice in joint replacement surgery.

Dr. Head pioneered joint replacement techniques that have helped thousands of people regain their mobility. He holds several patents for orthopedic devices and instruments for proper placement of the prosthetic devices. He also established the technique and protocol for bone grafts in the lower extremity for large defects that resulted from tumors or failed joints. Dr. Head was fastidious in his belief that patients would experience optimal surgical results when treated at a dedicated joint center that provides comprehensive and ongoing medical care. Though he is now retired, the Texas Center for Joint Replacement continues to provide the forward-thinking, specialized care for patients for which Dr. Head is lauded.



Dr. William Head (right) pictured with Dr. Francisco Cigarroa, renowned transplant surgeon and former chancellor of the University of Texas System.

A Commitment to Giving Back

Dr. Head and his late wife, Rita, made several mission trips to Central America, during which Dr. Head became acutely aware of the need to provide medical assistance to the underserved. After reading several newspaper articles about the lack of adequate medical care in South Texas, and speaking with a patient from Brownsville, who himself was a physician, Dr. Head decided to focus their philanthropic endeavors within Texas—namely, the Rio Grande Valley.

“I decided it was better to concentrate my efforts in my own state where there was a great need,” says Dr. Head. With a simple phone call, a newfound friendship was formed with Dr. Francisco Cigarroa, and a long-term financial commitment with the University of Texas System began.

In 2013, the Texas Legislature approved the creation of a new university and medical school in the Rio Grande Valley by joining the University of Texas-Pan American and the University of Texas at Brownsville/Texas Southmost College. When the chancellor at that time, Dr. Francisco Cigarroa, shared with Dr. Head his desire to fully fund the education of the medical school’s charter class of 55 students, the notion had his full support and Dr. Head became the first private donor to the newly established University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) School of Medicine by donating \$600,000 to create student scholarships. Dr. Head has continued to donate annually to this program.



Dr. Head (center) takes a hardhat tour of the UTRGV School of Medicine during its construction.

In the few years since its inception, Dr. Head has been extremely impressed and encouraged by the advances made at the UTRGV School of Medicine. The school is actively working to close the gaps in access to affordable healthcare services while also expanding educational and career opportunities for local residents. The school has opened clinics in rural and underserved areas, which provide the training grounds for students and further insight into the social determinants of health disparities that researchers are examining.

A Far Reaching Impact

The school is also taking medical care to the region's most vulnerable population, those that live in the "colonias", which are impoverished communities in rural areas that often lack basic infrastructure and services. By using a mobile health unit—UT Health RGV UniMóvil—UTRGV can reach patients who may not have access to transportation and otherwise are unable to receive medical care.

Dr. Head admires how UTRGV medical students are actively involved in identifying and addressing the most critical areas of need in an organized, straightforward manner. "They are addressing problems in the Valley by going into the community to provide consultations and health care services." "[UTRGV is] addressing issues of sanitation, inoculation, and nutrition. Diabetes, hypertension and heart disease are significant [in the region] and they are addressing all of the problems that have been in the Valley and have been underserved for so long."

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley is grateful for the donations made by Dr. Head. His support allows the University to educate the next generation of physicians and significantly improve the health of our community. UTRGV School of Medicine student David Goldblatt said that the scholarship funded by Dr. Head has allowed him to achieve his ultimate dream of becoming a physician-scientist. "Receiving the scholarship in my first year alleviated an immense financial burden and allowed me to concentrate on what matters most—learning to be a competent and compassionate doctor," said Goldblatt.

Echoing those sentiments, Dr. Kelly Scrivner, UTRGV Executive Vice President for Institutional Advancement, states, "The impact of Dr. Head's donation is far reaching. Scholarships are imperative to fulfilling our mission of providing an exceptionally innovative learning experience that will produce physicians of the highest caliber. With his donation, Dr. Head is opening doors for future physicians and laying the groundwork for increased medical access in the Rio Grande Valley."

Dr. Head encourages others to make philanthropy a priority, stating, "When you give back you get a lot more than you give. Seeing the fruit of your donation, seeing bright young people coming forward that are going to carry on the practice of medicine and serving their community is rewarding. It is such a good feeling to know that you're helping someone else along, and small donations can create bigger donations. It's like the mustard seed: a small seed that can produce great things."