



EXPANSION EFFORTS CONTINUE

BY NADIA M. WHITEHEAD



President Richard Lange, MD, MBA, playfully pretends to start up a tractor after the Medical Sciences Building II groundbreaking ceremony.

TTUHSC El Paso's New Building to Triple Research Space by 2019

In May, TTUHSC El Paso broke ground on the Medical Sciences Building (MSB) II, an \$83 million, 219,900-square-foot facility. The highly anticipated five-story building will add crucial resources to the campus, including more instructional space, a dining and food services area, and the campus' largest teaching auditorium yet.

Most importantly, the building will allow TTUHSC El Paso to significantly increase its hand in research.

"The MSB II will house 50 new medical scientists at full capacity and triple the amount of laboratory space currently on campus," said Peter Rotwein, MD, vice president for research.

This research expansion won't just benefit the institution, but the greater Paso del Norte region as a whole. As TTUHSC El Paso continues to grow, it has prioritized research programs that will improve public health in El Paso's unique border population.

That means focusing on prevalent health issues like diabetes and obesity. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 12 percent of El Pasoans have diabetes, while the national average is just 9.3 percent. The county also has a higher percentage of overweight adults compared to state and national averages, putting residents at a higher risk for health problems like diabetes and high blood pressure.

Cancer—also prevalent in the Borderland—is another growing research focus for TTUHSC El Paso. Cervical cancer rates in El Paso women are higher than the national average. Prostate cancer rates are also a problem. According to the Paso del



Key community members and TTUHSC El Paso leadership gathered for a ceremonial groundbreaking of the Medical Sciences Building II in May.

"This new building is another step toward advancing health research for the region we serve," TTUHSC El Paso President Richard Lange, MD, MBA, explained. "Here, we will build the scientists that will help cure AIDs, address Alzheimer's and fight cancer in the Borderland."



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Nearly half of the square footage in the Medical Sciences Building II will be dedicated to laboratory space.

Norte Institute for Healthy Living, about 134 of every 100,000 men in El Paso will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime, compared to the state average of 106.

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TTUHSC El Paso’s research undertakings may even go beyond the Borderland, eventually impacting individuals throughout the U.S.

With an 81 percent Hispanic population, El Paso is a glimpse of what the nation will soon resemble. By 2060, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that Hispanics will comprise more than 28 percent of the U.S. population.

Now, more than ever, research on Hispanic individuals and the health issues they face is imperative, Rotwein said.

The institution already boasts an impressive track record when it comes to research. In 2016, TTUHSC El Paso obtained more than \$6 million in public research funding from agencies such as the National Institutes of Health, the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Much of that funding went to research on health issues that affect people in El Paso—even those that are not as well-known, such as how bipolar disorder and Alzheimer’s disease may manifest differently in Latinos and how certain breast cancer gene mutations are more prevalent in Latinas than other groups of women.

More lab space and research scientists on campus will only increase the number of medically-important projects like these.

“This building is integral to our vision for TTUHSC El Paso,” Rotwein said. “We have the opportunity to grow our faculty and provide them with the resources not only to become the most successful scientists and physician-scientists that they can be but also to play key roles in improving health in our region.”

Construction of the MSB II is expected to be complete in 2019. 

