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## **Dr. Joseph Fitzwater receives UT Southwestern's top women's health award**

DALLAS – Dr. Joseph Fitzwater performed his first surgeries as a child, in his grandfather's garage.

Luckily, his patients weren't human – they weren't even alive. His grandfather, orthopaedic surgeon Dr. F. Leon Ware, was teaching him how to repair broken leg bones from cows.

"He was a great man," Dr. Fitzwater said. "I wish he was alive to see me graduate. I wanted to be a doctor for as long as I can remember, and he fostered it and let it grow."

Despite an early interest in orthopaedics, and later in trauma surgery, Dr. Fitzwater, 26, found during his rotations at UT Southwestern Medical School that his real interest lay in obstetrics and gynecology.

"It's one of the most uplifting and exhilarating experiences I've had," he said of one birth he attended.

Dr. Fitzwater's dedication has won him the 2008 Annelle M. Ahmed, M.D., Women's Health Care Award. The accolade is given in honor of Dr. Ahmed, a UT Southwestern resident and faculty member who died of breast cancer at 39.

"Like Dr. Ahmed, Joe exhibits a true passion for medicine and a deep caring for his patients," said Dr. Susan Cox, associate dean for medical education, director of clerkships for the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, and holder of the Gillette Professorship in Obstetrics and Gynecology. "He has sound clinical judgment, common sense, and a strong fund of knowledge.

"I have never seen Joe down or angry; only happy and pleasant."

Dr. Fitzwater graduated cum laude in 2004 from Baylor University with a bachelor's degree in the school's University Scholars Program, a self-made curriculum for advanced students.

Dr. Fitzwater, who grew up in Dallas, knew that he might have some difficulties going into such a woman-dominated field, and indeed some patients have refused him as their doctor because he's male. "You just have to tell yourself it's not personal," he said.

Some have also turned him down because he happens to look much younger than his 26 years. "I tried to grow a beard once, but my wife, Melissa, said 'No.' "

One of Dr. Fitzwater's goals in his residency at UT Southwestern is to cultivate an air of gravitas, in hopes it will act as a counterweight to his youthful demeanor.

Dr. Fitzwater has been involved with the Southwestern Christian Fellowship. During his first two years in medical school, he also volunteered at Voice of Hope Ministries, tutoring elementary and junior high school students.

Dr. Fitzwater is the middle of three brothers, the oldest of whom, John, is a 2005 graduate at UT Southwestern. He is completing a general surgery residency in Lubbock.

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