

## NCCAM Plays Key Role in Integrative Medicine Task Force

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) is the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) principal component for research on complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). The NIH Clinical Center is a hospital that combines medical research with patient care. Both have met and joined forces to develop a new Clinical Center Integrative Medicine Task Force—a project being chaired by Marc R. Blackman, M.D., NCCAM's Clinical Director and Director of Intramural Research. Dr. Blackman describes integrative medicine as



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NCCAM Clinical Director  
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combining mainstream medical therapies and CAM therapies for which there is high-quality scientific evidence of safety and effectiveness.

Within the past few years, CAM has become a more visible presence at NIH, as illustrated by the establishment of NCCAM as well as the Office of Cancer Complementary and Alternative Medicine at the National Cancer Institute, and the growth of CAM activities (primarily education- or patient-care-oriented) within some Clinical Center departments. An increasing number of Clinical Center patients use, and/or request, CAM modalities as part of their treatment while taking part in research studies at NIH.

The task force offers a new opportunity to expand and evaluate the Clinical Center's ongoing CAM efforts; to gather knowledge from invited experts (inside and outside NIH) on issues in the CAM field, such as credentialing and licensure, quality assurance, and education; and to plan and create a state-of-the-art clinical consult service on CAM. This service will be made up of an interdisciplinary group of experts in various fields of CAM who will provide information on a patient's case on request



Clinical Center staff consult on a patient's case

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## 10 Things To Know About Evaluating Medical Resources on the Web

The number of Web sites offering health-related resources grows every day. Many sites provide valuable information, while others may have information that is unreliable or misleading. The following are questions you should consider as you look for health information online. Answering these questions when you visit a new site will help you evaluate the information you find.

### 1. Who runs this site?

Any good health-related Web site should make it easy for you to learn who is responsible for the site and its information.

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## NCCAM Grantees Honored

Three NCCAM grantees were among those honored for best presentations at the International Scientific Conference on Complementary, Alternative and Integrative Medicine, held April 12–14, 2002, in Boston, Massachusetts. They were George P. Kudolo, Ph.D., University of Texas Health Science Center, “In vitro effects of ginkgo biloba extract on collagen-induced aggregation and thromboxan B2 synthesis in platelets from type 2 diabetic subjects”; Peter M. Wolsko, M.D., M.P.H., Harvard Medical School, “Randomized double-blind placebo-controlled pilot trial of static magnetic therapy for knee osteoarthritis”; and Philippe O. Szapary, M.D., University of Pennsylvania, “A double-blind, randomized, placebo-controlled clinical trial of guggul extract with hypercholesterolemia.” In addition, the data set used by another awardee, Gloria Yeh, M.D., was drawn from NCCAM-supported research. Dr. Yeh spoke on “Complementary and alternative therapy use among persons with diabetes mellitus in a national survey.”

## Research Funding Opportunities

Visit [nccam.nih.gov/research](http://nccam.nih.gov/research) on the Web for more information on the following and other NCCAM funding opportunities.

- ▶ Program Announcement (PA-01-114): Chromium As Adjuvant Therapy for Type 2 Diabetes and Impaired Glucose Tolerance. Sponsors: NCCAM, the NIH Office of Dietary Supplements, and the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

### Complementary and Alternative Medicine at the NIH

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**NCCAM Clearinghouse:** For information about NCCAM or any aspect of complementary and alternative medicine, contact the NCCAM Clearinghouse:

Toll free: 1-888-644-6226

International: 301-519-3153

TTY (for deaf or hard-of-hearing callers): 1-866-464-3615

Fax: 1-866-464-3616

E-mail: [info@nccam.nih.gov](mailto:info@nccam.nih.gov)

Address: NCCAM Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 7923, Gaithersburg, MD 20898-7923

Fax-on-Demand Service: 1-888-644-6226

**Our mission:** The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) is dedicated to exploring complementary and alternative healing practices in the context of rigorous science, training CAM researchers, and disseminating authoritative information to the public and professionals.

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## WHO Releases Global Plan on CAM Issues

On May 16, 2002, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced a global plan to address issues in what it calls traditional medicine (TM) and complementary/alternative medicine (CAM; see WHO's Web site, given below, for definitions of these terms). WHO, a branch of the United Nations, is the world's leading international health agency. NCCAM is a WHO Collaborating Center for Traditional Medicine. In its plan, WHO discusses its role and strategies to assist countries, focusing on areas such as national policies; regulatory issues; safety, efficacy, and quality of TM and CAM therapies; access; and “therapeutically sound” use. Needs, challenges (ranging from standardizing botanical products to preserving historical knowledge of TM), and opportunities in both developing and developed countries are discussed. This formal entry of WHO into the TM/CAM arena is widely viewed as significant. To view WHO's plan and related documents, visit [www.who.int](http://www.who.int).

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from the patient's health care team. Dr. Blackman intends to create a “contemporary, meaningful” service, one that balances the patient's needs and desires regarding possible use of a CAM therapy with the highest level of evidence regarding the therapy's safety and effectiveness.

In addition, the work of the task force will be evaluated in the context of a clinical research study. The hope is to obtain knowledge that will ultimately benefit the CAM community at large, including researchers, mainstream health care practitioners, CAM practitioners, and patients.

Dr. Blackman expects the task force to produce an initial concept paper, which he hopes to submit to a medical journal by the end of 2002. Work on setting up the CAM clinical consult service would begin at or before that time. It is anticipated that the first detailed report on the success of the consult service will be published in 3 to 5 years.

“Part of NCCAM's mandate from Congress,” says Dr. Blackman, “is to increase and disseminate new knowledge related to CAM. Our goal in this task force is to do just that. We believe that we have an opportunity to contribute to CAM clinical care, education, and research at the NIH; to communicate our experience to other institutions around the Nation; and to provide the public with reliable information for decisionmaking about CAM use and CAM care.” ■

## 10 Things To Know, continued from pg. 1

### 2. Who pays for the site?

It costs money to run a Web site. The source of a Web site's funding should be clearly stated or readily apparent. Funding source(s) can affect what content is presented, how the content is presented, and what the site owners want to accomplish on the site. For example, does the site sell advertising? Is it sponsored by a drug company?

### 3. What is the purpose of the site?

An "About This Site" link appears on many sites; if it's there, use it. The purpose of the site should be clearly stated and should help you evaluate the trustworthiness of the information.

### 4. Where does the information come from?

Many health/medical sites post information collected from other Web sites or sources. If the person or organization in charge of the site did not create the information, the source should be indicated.

### 5. What is the basis of the information?

In addition to identifying who wrote the material you are reading, the site should describe the evidence that the material is based on. Medical facts and figures should have references (such as to articles in medical journals). Also, opinions or advice should be clearly set apart from information that is "evidence-based" (that is, based on research results).

### 6. How is the information selected?

Is there an editorial board? Do people with excellent professional and scientific qualifications review the material before it is posted?

### 7. How current is the information?

Web sites should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. It is particularly important that medical information be current. The most recent update or review date should be clearly posted.

### 8. How does the site choose links to other sites?

Web sites usually have a policy about how they establish links to other sites. Some medical sites take a conservative approach and don't link to any other sites. Some link to any site that asks or pays for a link. Others only link to sites that have met certain criteria.

### 9. What information about you does the site collect and why?

Web sites routinely track the paths visitors take through their sites to determine what pages are being used. However, many health Web sites ask for you to "subscribe" or "become a member." In some cases, this may be so that they can collect a user fee or select information for you that is relevant to your concerns. In all cases, this will give the site personal information about you.

Any credible health site asking for this kind of information should tell you exactly what they will and will not do with it. Be certain that you read and understand any privacy policy or similar language on the site, and don't sign up for anything that you are not sure you fully understand.

### 10. How does the site manage interactions with visitors?

There should always be a way for you to contact the site owner if you run across problems or have questions or feedback. ■

*Excerpted from the NCCAM fact sheet 10 Things To Know About Evaluating Medical Resources on the Web.*

## Calendar of Events



This calendar lists meetings on complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) that are sponsored or organized by NCCAM or other components of NIH. Agendas for NCCAM events are posted at [nccam.nih.gov](http://nccam.nih.gov). The information line for NCCAM meetings is 301-594-9632.

### JULY 2002

**Distinguished Lectures in Complementary and Alternative Medicine:** July 18, 2002—"Alternative to What? Complementary to Whom? On Some Aspects of Medicine's Scientific Identity." Speaker: Charles E. Rosenberg, Ph.D., Professor of the History of Science and of Social Sciences, Harvard University. Time and location: 3 p.m. e.t.; Masur Auditorium, NIH, Bethesda, Maryland.

### AUGUST 2002

**National Advisory Council for Complementary and Alternative Medicine:** August 26, 2002—Time and location: 8:30 a.m. e.t.; Neuroscience Building, NIH, Bethesda, Maryland.

## NIH Publishes Second Annual Bibliography of Dietary Supplement Research

The Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS) at the National Institutes of Health has released the second *Annual Bibliography of Significant Advances in Dietary Supplement Research*. Developed as a joint effort of ODS and the Consumer Healthcare Products Association, it presents a selection of significant research in the dietary supplement field from peer-reviewed journals during 2000. Contents include vitamins, minerals, fats and fatty acids, fat substitutes, fiber and soy, botanicals, and other supplements, such as glucosamine and chondroitin. Copies may be downloaded from the ODS Web site at [ods.od.nih.gov/publications/publications.html](http://ods.od.nih.gov/publications/publications.html); single copies may be requested by e-mail ([ods@nih.gov](mailto:ods@nih.gov), provide your postal address).

NCCAM maintains an “Alerts and Advisories” section on its Web site, containing announcements from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and other Federal agencies pertaining to CAM therapies and safety.



The results of an NCCAM-supported study on the use of St. John’s wort to treat major depression were released April 9, 2002. If you would like further information, consult the NCCAM Web site or contact the NCCAM Clearinghouse.



New and updated fact sheets can be found on the NCCAM Web site at [nccam.nih.gov](http://nccam.nih.gov):

- ▶ *10 Things To Know About Evaluating Medical Resources on the Web* (new)
- ▶ *What Is Complementary and Alternative Medicine?* (new)
- ▶ *About Clinical Trials and Complementary and Alternative Medicine* (new)
- ▶ *Acupuncture* (updated March 2002)
- ▶ *St. John’s Wort* (updated April 2002)

Any of the above information may also be obtained by contacting the Clearinghouse (see box, pg. 2).

## NCCAM Launches Redesigned Site

The NCCAM Web site, [nccam.nih.gov](http://nccam.nih.gov), has been redesigned to better serve all users. The new design, launched in May 2002, offers a fresh new look and many improvements. Changes include easier navigation, fewer clicks to access important information, and new links and content. In addition, the content has been reorganized so that finding information is more intuitive. To create the new design, NCCAM recruited likely users—consumers, researchers, physicians, and CAM practitioners—to test the old site and a prototype of the new site, then incorporated the results.

We invite you to visit the NCCAM Web site. Let us know what you think!

## NCCAM Site Named One of the Top 100

*Yahoo! Internet Life* magazine has named NCCAM’s Web site as one of its “100 Best Sites for ’02.” NCCAM’s site was cited for “Best Alternative Medical Information.” This is the second year in a row that NCCAM has received this honor.

**Complementary and Alternative Medicine at the NIH**  
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