

## NCCAM Appoints First Deputy Director

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) has appointed Margaret A. Chesney, Ph.D., as its first Deputy Director, following a nationwide search. Dr. Chesney, who assumed her duties on February 9, 2003, partners with Director Stephen E. Straus, M.D., in planning, directing, and managing the programs and resources of the Center.

“Dr. Chesney brings to this position an extraordinary record of scientific achievement and leadership in studies of the complex behaviors that lead to cardiovascular diseases and AIDS,

and of rigorous trials of novel interventions to prevent them,” said Dr. Straus. He added, “With these attributes and experiences, she is well poised to enhance NCCAM’s overall scientific effectiveness. Her influence will be felt most immediately on the Center’s portfolio of studies of mind–body approaches to healing and related behavioral and social science investigations.”

Prior to joining NCCAM, Dr. Chesney was professor of medicine and epidemiology at the School of Medicine, University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), where she was codirector of the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies and director of the behavioral medicine and epidemiology core of the UCSF Center for AIDS Research. Most recently, she was also a senior visiting scientist in the National Institutes of Health Office of Women’s Health, in the Office of the Director.



Margaret A. Chesney, Ph.D., Deputy Director

## Training Researchers in CAM

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) is perhaps best known for the rigorous scientific research it supports on complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies and practices. For NCCAM to achieve its research goals, however, it needs to be able to draw upon a pool of investigators who are skilled in the areas of both CAM and conventional scientific research. How does NCCAM help develop this pool? It does so through one of its key strategic areas: research training and career development.



Michael Quon, M.D., Ph.D. (left), Chief of the Diabetes Unit, NCCAM Division of Intramural Research, with postdoctoral trainees Edward Lynn, Ph.D., and Michelle Vincent, Ph.D.

“Training and mentorship are essential to scientific progress. Among our greatest responsibilities as scientists is to ensure there are energetic, imaginative, and productive people who will follow us,” states Stephen E. Straus, M.D., NCCAM Director. “For CAM research, there is an added challenge: We must first recruit a generation of able scientists to do CAM research and then afford them the resources to train and mentor their scientific successors.

Throughout her career, Dr. Chesney has designed and conducted original research on the relationship between behavior and chronic illness and on behavioral factors in clinical trials, including issues of recruitment, adherence, and retention. She also worked on the development and evaluation of psychosocial and behavioral interventions for health promotion, illness prevention, and treatment. These are all experiences deemed critical to the success of the Center’s research enterprise, with its emphasis on clinical trials.

Dr. Chesney received her undergraduate degree summa cum laude from Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington; master’s and doctor’s degrees in clinical psychology and counseling from Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado; and post-doctoral fellowship training in the Department of Psychiatry at Temple University’s School of Medicine. Dr. Chesney has served as president of the Academy of Behavioral Medicine Research, the American Psychosomatic Society, and the American Psychological Association’s Division of Health Psychology. She is a recipient of many awards and honors, including election to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. Dr. Chesney is an

*continued on pg. 3*

*continued on pg. 2*

## First Deputy Director, continued from pg. 1

author or coauthor of over 240 scholarly research papers and publications, is associate editor of *Psychology, Health and Medicine*, and serves on numerous editorial boards.

Dr. Chesney took a few moments during her busy first week at NCCAM to speak with *Complementary and Alternative Medicine at the NIH*. When asked what had attracted her to her new position, she replied: "I have long been aware of the vast numbers of people who turn to complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) treatments and the need to test them. The public needs to know what is safe and effective. Many of today's mainstream medicines and approaches were once thought of as 'alternative' to what was the care of the day, so NCCAM follows in the tradition of conducting the science to provide the evidence to expand the complementary care portfolio that practitioners have to offer the public. Participating in that endeavor was very appealing to me as a way that I could contribute to making a difference."

When Dr. Chesney was asked what she saw as the most interesting challenges awaiting her as Deputy Director, she responded: "The greatest challenge right now is setting priorities. With the challenges that our nation faces at the present time, there will, in all likelihood, be less funding for research. At NCCAM we have a very broad mandate—to look at CAM approaches throughout all of medicine, across all diseases and conditions. Setting priorities among the many very intriguing research questions that are positioned at our threshold will be a very difficult challenge. Fortunately, the Center has a very experienced team and superb advisory council to make these tough choices."

In light of her research background, Dr. Chesney was asked whether there are any CAM mind–body modalities that she finds particularly intriguing. She replied: "My research has focused on stress-related conditions, so I continue to be intrigued by how the mind, in response to stress in the environment, is associated with a range of illnesses and conditions. I'm intrigued with the diversity of the individual responses to stress; I am eager to understand what the mechanisms are; and I am encouraged by research that suggests that there may be modalities that can interrupt this process and render people more resistant to stress in their daily lives." ■

### 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:

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**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, educating and training CAM researchers, and disseminating authoritative information to the public and professionals.

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## New Studies Launched

Among new studies recently announced by NCCAM are two clinical trials and an expert-panel study.

First, NCCAM is partnering with the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) in the first large-scale clinical trial of **EDTA chelation therapy** as a treatment for **coronary artery disease (CAD)**, the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. In this therapy, EDTA, a manmade amino acid, is delivered through the veins so that it can bind to excess and/or toxic metals and aid in their release from the body. EDTA chelation is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for treating lead poisoning and other heavy-metal toxicity. It is not FDA-approved to treat CAD, but some physicians and alternative medicine practitioners have recommended it; one estimate states that more than 800,000 visits to receive it were made in the United States in 1997 alone. Because of this rate of use and the high death rate from CAD, NCCAM and NHLBI are seeking more clarity on whether EDTA chelation therapy is indeed an effective and safe treatment for CAD. The study will also investigate a high-dose vitamin therapy as a treatment for CAD.

At press time, recruitment for over 2,000 participants around the United States was expected to begin in late spring 2003. To qualify, participants will have to be at least 50 years old, have had one heart attack, and have not previously had chelation therapy. For more information, go to [nccam.nih.gov/news/2002/chelation/q-and-a](http://nccam.nih.gov/news/2002/chelation/q-and-a).

A second clinical trial announced by NCCAM will study the safety and effectiveness of the herb **St. John's wort** as a treatment for **minor depression**. The trial is being cosponsored with the National Institute of Mental Health and the NIH Office of Dietary Supplements. Minor depression is a common but significant disorder that may impair sufferers' functioning and quality of life and is a serious risk factor for major depression (a more severe type of depression). The study will enroll 300 participants aged 18 to 85 at three sites (go to [www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov) and enter "minor depression" in the "Search Clinical Trials" box). To view a news release, go to [nccam.nih.gov/news/2003/index](http://nccam.nih.gov/news/2003/index).

NCCAM and 16 Federal cosponsors have announced the launch of an **Institute of Medicine (IOM) study** on the scientific and policy implications of the use of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) by the American public. IOM is a component of the National Academies, a private, nonprofit, nongovernmental institution created by Congress to advise the nation on scientific and technological matters. For this nearly 2-year study, IOM will assemble a panel of over one dozen leading scholars from both CAM and conventional disciplines. They will gather and analyze existing research findings about CAM and address key questions and issues—e.g., on CAM use, research, regulation, integration, reimbursement, and training and certification. The findings of this expert panel are expected to serve as a complement to last year's recommendations of the White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine Policy. To read more, go to [nccam.nih.gov/news/2002/102102](http://nccam.nih.gov/news/2002/102102). Information on any of the above three studies may also be obtained by contacting the NCCAM Clearinghouse (see box at left). ■

## Training Researchers, continued from pg. 1

NCCAM is meeting these needs by funding doctoral, postdoctoral, and career awards to dozens of future leaders in the field.”

NCCAM works to increase the number, quality, and diversity of CAM researchers by providing grants to:

- ▶ Conventional medical researchers and practitioners,<sup>1</sup> so they can increase their knowledge and experience in specific CAM research areas;
- ▶ CAM practitioners, so they can gain knowledge and experience in conducting rigorous research in their field;
- ▶ Predoctoral and postdoctoral students who are interested in pursuing a career in CAM research;
- ▶ Foreign scientists, through the new NCCAM International Postdoctoral Fellowship; and
- ▶ Members of populations (such as minorities and persons with disabilities) who are underrepresented in the scientific research field and are interested in CAM research careers.

In addition, NCCAM awards funds to institutions such as universities, medical schools, and foundations to develop training and curriculum development programs in CAM research.

Current grantees are working on a variety of projects to improve their research skills and advance their careers, as well as find out more about CAM therapies, all to benefit public health. A few examples are:

- ▶ Identifying cardioprotective antioxidants in exotic fruits;
- ▶ Characterizing the active components of cranberry that may help prevent urinary tract infections;
- ▶ Investigating the biological and chemical activity of red clover for use in women’s cardiovascular health;
- ▶ Studying the effects of ginseng in an animal model of diabetes;
- ▶ Finding out more about meditation, through the use of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI); and
- ▶ Learning more about how acupuncture relieves pain.

For more information on training and career development opportunities available through NCCAM, visit [nccam.nih.gov](http://nccam.nih.gov) and click on “Training.” Topics covered range from “how-to’s,” program announcements, and NIH Loan Repayment Programs to profiles of current holders of NCCAM-funded Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award Institutional Training Grants. Designated program officers in NCCAM’s Division of Extramural Research and Training (see [nccam.nih.gov/training/overview](http://nccam.nih.gov/training/overview)) are available to answer questions and clarify issues for potential applicants. ■

1. Conventional medicine is medicine as practiced by holders of M.D. (medical doctor) or D.O. (doctor of osteopathy) degrees and by their allied health professionals, such as physical therapists, psychologists, and registered nurses. Other terms for conventional medicine include allopathy; Western, mainstream, orthodox, and regular medicine; and biomedicine. To find out more, see the NCCAM fact sheet “What Is Complementary and Alternative Medicine?”

## Ephedra and Health Risk

On February 28, 2003, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced a series of actions designed to protect Americans from potentially serious risks of dietary supplement products containing **ephedra**. These products have been in the news recently because of the deaths of well-known athletes. HHS, NCCAM, and other agencies caution the public that **the use of ephedra poses health risks**. It is especially risky when used for strenuous exercise and/or with other stimulants such as caffeine. A RAND scientific report, partially funded by NCCAM, has also been released on ephedra. For consumer advice and links to documents, go to [nccam.nih.gov/health/alerts/ephedra/ephedra](http://nccam.nih.gov/health/alerts/ephedra/ephedra) or contact the NCCAM Clearinghouse (see pg. 2). ■

## GET NCCAM NEWS BY E-MAIL

NCCAM has launched an electronic news bulletin, the *NCCAM Update*. The *Update*, sent by e-mail approximately once per month, informs readers about NCCAM activities and announcements. There is no charge for the service. To find out more or to subscribe, go to [nccam.nih.gov/news](http://nccam.nih.gov/news).

## 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, and includes information available at press time. For more details, check the NCCAM Web site or call the NCCAM meeting line at 301-594-9632.

### MAY 2003

**Distinguished Lectures in the Science of Complementary and Alternative Medicine:** May 6, 2003. “Hypnosis and Group Support in Medical Care: Altering Perception and Reality.” Speaker: David Spiegel, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University School of Medicine. Time and location: 12 noon to 1 p.m. ET; Masur Auditorium, NIH, Bethesda, Maryland.

### JUNE 2003

**Meeting of the National Advisory Council for Complementary and Alternative Medicine:** June 2, 2003—Location: Neuroscience Building, NIH, Bethesda, Maryland.

**Free Radicals: The Pros and Cons of Antioxidants:** June 26–27, 2003—Location: Bethesda, Maryland. Cosponsored by NCCAM, the National Cancer Institute, the NIH Office of Dietary Supplements, the American Institute for Cancer Research, and the American Society for Nutritional Sciences.

Official Business

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## NEWS FOR RESEARCHERS

### From NCCAM's Office of Clinical and Regulatory Affairs:

The Office has released a new guidelines document, "Considerations for NCCAM Clinical Trial Grant Applications," which became effective for all applications on January 1, 2003. For a copy, go to [nccam.nih.gov/research/policies/clinical-considerations.htm](http://nccam.nih.gov/research/policies/clinical-considerations.htm).

### Research Funding Opportunities:

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

- ▶ Request for Applications (RFA-AT-03-004): Cranberry: Urinary Tract Infection and Other Conditions. This new initiative will support basic and clinical research on the role of cranberry in the prevention and treatment of urinary tract infections and other conditions. Sponsors: NCCAM, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, and NIH Office of Dietary Supplements.
- ▶ Program Announcement (PA-03-050): NCCAM International Postdoctoral Fellowship. This new NCCAM fellowship will train non-immigrant foreign scientists in rigorous scientific research methodology at facilities in the United States, to prepare them to conduct high-quality research in CAM in their home countries.
- ▶ Request for Applications (RFA-OB-03-004): Mind-Body Interactions and Health, Research Infrastructure Program. Sponsors: NCCAM and 14 other components of NIH.
- ▶ Request for Applications (RFA-OB-03-005): Mind-Body Interactions and Health, Exploratory/Developmental Research Program. Sponsors: NCCAM and 15 other components of NIH.

### NCCAM Exhibits at Upcoming Professional Meetings:

- ▶ World Federation of Chiropractic ([www.chiroweb.com/wfcorlando2003](http://www.chiroweb.com/wfcorlando2003)), May 1-3, Orlando, Florida.
- ▶ American Society for Microbiology ([www.asmsa.org/mtgsrc/generalmeeting.htm](http://www.asmsa.org/mtgsrc/generalmeeting.htm)), May 18-22, Washington, D.C.
- ▶ American Society of Clinical Oncology ([www.asco.org](http://www.asco.org)), May 31-June 3, Chicago, Illinois.
- ▶ Society for Public Health Education ([www.sophe.org](http://www.sophe.org)), June 18-20, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

## OTHER INFORMATION

What have been the results of the research funded by NCCAM? A new database from NCCAM, the **Grantee Publications Database**, offers citations to journal articles by NCCAM grantees on their research findings. The database is searchable by journal, article title, principal investigator, date, and grant. Go to [nccam.nih.gov](http://nccam.nih.gov).



The summary of an evidence-based report partially funded by NCCAM, "**S-Adenosyl-L-Methionine [SAMe]** for Treatment of Depression, Osteoarthritis, and Liver Disease," has been published by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, a Federal agency. For a copy, go to [www.ahrq.gov/clinic/epcsums/samesum.htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/epcsums/samesum.htm) or call 1-800-358-9295.



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