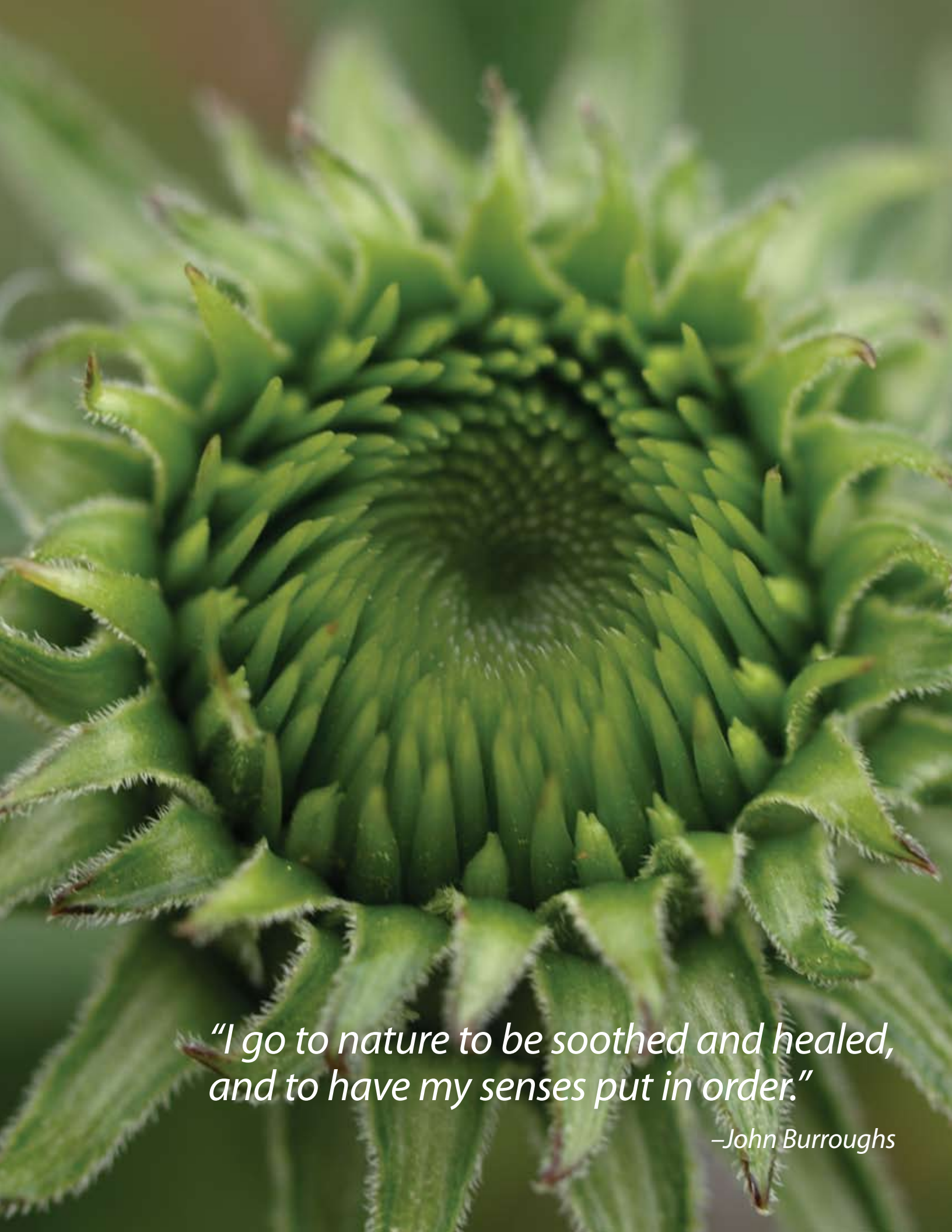
Helfgott RESEARCH INSTITUTE

2009-2010 ANNUAL REPORT

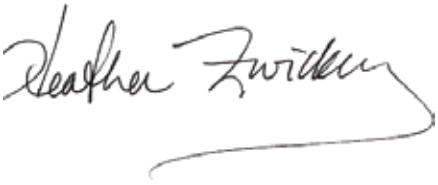

"I go to nature to be soothed and healed,
and to have my senses put in order."
–John Burroughs

Letter from the Director

Greetings! The Helfgott Research Institute at the National College of Natural Medicine has had an exciting year. We've spent a great deal of time in the public eye this year. Our investigators have been speaking at national and international conferences. We have been interviewed for magazines and books, published our own research and have won awards. It's been six years since the inception of the Helfgott Research Institute and our impact in natural medicine continues to grow.

There is great opportunity for lasting growth. As the health of Americans continues to decline, the need for additional approaches to disease is increasingly evident. Our research in Chinese medicine, naturopathic medicine, nutrition, mind-body medicine and other natural therapies demonstrates that there are powerful alternatives for people to achieve wellness. With every study, we at Helfgott hope to provide evidence for how natural therapies can decrease obesity, treat pain, prevent cancer and help people live healthier lives. We stay ever true to our mission to advance the science of natural medicine.

This is the last letter that I will write as director of Helfgott. I'm stepping down from my administrative role in June 2010. My passion for research and education in natural medicine has not waned; you will continue to see me teaching at NCNM and conducting studies at Helfgott. However, my passion for global health will be taking a more central role in my life. It has been my pleasure to serve as the dean of research at NCNM and the director of research at Helfgott Research Institute. I hope that you will welcome the next leader of Helfgott and continue to support us.



Heather Zwickey, PhD
Director, Helfgott Research Institute
Dean of Research, National College of Natural Medicine

Examining the Evidence

It is an exciting time to be involved in complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) research. While many CAM therapies and modalities are ancient, applying a biomedical research perspective to the field is a relatively new undertaking. The challenge? Researching CAM therapies in a way that remains true to how they are actually practiced. This is why it is so crucial for CAM clinicians, learning institutions and students to join the hundreds of researchers working to develop methods of studying modalities that may not fit neatly into traditional biomedical research approaches.

CAM clinicians often maintain that much of the research done on CAM therapies is not useful to their practice. Rigorously designed studies may ignore the fact that most CAM therapies are used in tandem, or leave no room for the individualized nature of many CAM treatment plans. Frequently, those who study CAM have not been trained as a CAM clinician, or have had a limited exposure to the theory and practice of the different modalities. Yet, policy-influencing studies continue to be produced, very often with little input from those who practice CAM.

It is crucial to the profession to engage CAM clinicians, students and universities in research efforts. This is not to say that everyone in the CAM world should become a researcher. Encouraging more CAM clinicians to become physician-researchers would be wonderful, but, for those who prefer to focus on the clinic, it is important to develop the skills to think critically; to search for the best available evidence, appraise it and find ways to apply it to their work. Including these concepts in the curriculum at CAM educational institutions is key to producing CAM practitioners who understand the value of research and evidence in their work.

In addition to developing these skills, it is also important to incorporate research into the CAM clinical setting. Developing practice-based research networks and implementing electronic medical records are ways to glean valuable information about how exactly CAM is practiced. Encouraging clinicians to write and publish case reports and case series is another way of expanding the evidence base in CAM. Researchers and clinicians can then work together to objectively and holistically assess healing methods and further medical discovery.

Having a chorus of voices in the CAM research world who truly understand how the medicine is practiced could have profound implications for health and the health care system in the United States. Researchers, clinicians and students alike can navigate together in search of effective and preventive health care models. Medical students and clinicians can operate alongside researchers, eliminating an unnecessary gap of misinformation, and more importantly, add valuable insight for all medical professions. This combined effort will help to formulate a practical and functional set of blueprints for translating information across disciplines, and, in turn, develop a truly integrative medical model during this health care transformation.

New Career Paths —Our Alumni

Gene Bowman, ND

Post-doctoral fellow at Helfgott from 2004-2005, Dr. Bowman is now an assistant professor in the department of neurology at Oregon Health & Science University. His research focuses on nutrition and blood-brain barrier integrity in cognitive aging and Alzheimer's disease.

Tracy Edinger, ND

Research coordinator at Helfgott from 2006-2007, Dr. Edinger is a second-year post-doctoral research fellow at Oregon Health & Science University. Dr. Edinger studies attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder in adults.

Helané Wahbeh, ND

Post-doctoral fellow at Helfgott from 2004-2006, Dr. Wahbeh is now an assistant professor in the department of neurology at Oregon Health & Science University. Dr. Wahbeh studies the mechanisms of mind-body therapies. She is currently conducting a study on mindfulness meditation for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Selected Recent Publications from Helfgott

- Bowman GL, Dodge H, Calabrese C, Oken BS, Frei B, Kaye JA, Quinn JF. *Ascorbic acid and Rates of Cognitive Decline in Alzheimer's Disease*. Journal of Alzheimer's Disease, 2009.
- Chinnock JA, Zwickey H, Connelly E, Gregory W. *Cortisol Patterns and DHEA Levels of Patients with Obesity, Prediabetes, and Type 2 Diabetes: A Chart Review in a Naturopathic Primary Care Clinic*. International Journal of Naturopathic Medicine, 2009.
- Colbert AP, Cleaver J, Brown KA, Harling N, Hwang Y, Schifffke HC, Brons J, Qin Y. *Magnets Applied to Acupuncture Points as Therapy: a Literature Review.* Acupuncture in Medicine, 2008.
- Colbert AP, Markov MS, Souder J. *Static Magnetic Field Therapy: Methodological Challenges to Conducting Clinical Trials*. The Environmentalist, 2009.
- Mikolai J, Erlandsen A, Murison A, Brown K, Gregory, W, Raman-Caplan P, Zwickey, H. *In vivo Effects of Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera) Extract on the Activation of Lymphocytes*. Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, 2009.
- Tippens K, Marsman K, Zwickey H. *Is Prayer CAM?* Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, 2009.
- Tippens K, Pine B, Connelly E, Gregory W, Zwickey H. *Effects of Soy Infant Formula on the Development of Adult Soy Allergies*. International Journal of Naturopathic Medicine, 2009.
- Wahbeh H, Haywood A, Kaufman K, Harling N, Zwickey H. *Mind Body Medicine and Immune System Outcomes: A Systematic Review.* The Open Complementary Medicine Journal, 2009.


GIP

Enhancing Research Education

In August 2007, NCNM and the Helfgott Research Institute were awarded a grant from the National Institutes of Health to incorporate more evidence-based medicine (EBM) content into the curriculum at the College. As a result, NCNM, in partnership with the Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU), created the Research in Complementary and Alternative Medicine Program (R-CAMP) to expand faculty and student research literacy skills and help to increase quality and quantity of research content in classes. The projects described below are just a snapshot of the innovative work being done as part of the R-CAMP initiative.

Training the Trainers

One of the major goals of R-CAMP is to "train-the-trainers" by expanding faculty research literacy skills so that they are equipped to then pass this information on to other faculty and their students. To this end, R-CAMP directors from both NCNM and OHSU created a summer short course called Principles in Evidence-Based Medicine, in which participants become familiar with evidence-based resources, learn to critically appraise relevant literature, explore how to apply the evidence in medical literature to clinical practice, and learn strategies for teaching these concepts to medical students. In addition, the course allows time for participants to discuss how EBM fits or doesn't fit in the context of complementary and alternative medicine. This weeklong, 20-hour course is held each August and includes faculty from both the naturopathic and Chinese medicine schools at NCNM, Helfgott post-doctoral fellows, and NCNM librarians. In the future, an additional short course, called CAM Research Methods, will be developed for faculty who are interested in more advanced research topics.

Ways of Knowing

At first glance, there doesn't appear to be many similarities between Chinese medicine and Western biomedicine's ways of looking at the world. Classical Chinese medicine's approach to health and disease is holistic and systemic, and is based on philosophies generated centuries ago. Biomedical approaches, on the other hand, tend to be more reductionist and targeted, and based on the scientific method.

This being the case, it's no easy task to create a course that attempts to blend the two modes of thought. Last fall, the Classical Chinese Medicine Department at NCNM developed a class to untangle the similarities and differences between the Eastern and Western notions of health, disease, research and evidence called "Bridging Heaven and Earth: Ways of Knowing." This class encourages students to discover different ways of "knowing," including critical thinking and evaluation, reflective practice, pattern recognition, and intuition. It also explores the advantages and disadvantages of each paradigm of thought. At the end of the class, students are better equipped to investigate these issues on their own as they progress through their training and throughout their careers.

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A Vanguard Team

Each year, a select group of faculty members are chosen to be part of a Vanguard Faculty team, as part of the R-CAMP initiative. The Vanguards are trained in evidence-based medicine (EBM) concepts in a week-long intensive summer short course and attend a monthly evening meeting where they share teaching strategies and discuss their scholarly and research projects. Vanguard members also have access to additional funds and mentorship so they can broaden their professional development. Below are four examples of how Vanguard members have translated their experience with this initiative into their work at NCNM.

Paul Kalnins, ND, *LAc*

Dr. Kalnins teaches organ phenomenology and pathology, and integrates naturopathic, Chinese and biomedicine. While combining these two medical philosophies, he also incorporates the insights of anthroposophical medicine, a unique system of healing based on the premise that body, soul, and spirit form an integrated whole. Dr. Kalnins has also been involved with ongoing research at OHSU in plant pharmacology studies of passion flower.

Rich Barrett, ND

Dr. Barrett, a professor in the School of Naturopathic Medicine at NCNM, is no stranger to EBM concepts. Long before NCNM was awarded this grant, Dr. Barrett was teaching his students how to utilize medical literature in the clinic. Now, he has stepped up these activities in a number of arenas, from teaching residents how to appraise articles, to developing new EBM-based lectures in classes, to assistant-teaching an EBM class at OHSU for practicing physicians.

Joel Agresta, DC & Karen Frangos, ND

Restructuring an entire curriculum is a huge challenge, but when Drs. Joel Agresta and Karen Frangos, both assistant professors in the School of Naturopathic Medicine, overhauled the physical medicine program at the college, they also worked to incorporate the evidence base into the program's classes. One way they accomplished this was to include information about levels of evidence associated with different diagnostic tests and therapies and add references to class handouts and lectures. The newly designed curriculum has earned rave reviews from the students at NCNM.

Jim Cleaver, *LAc*

Having dedicated many years to imparting the concepts of classical Chinese medicine texts to eager students, School of Classical Chinese Medicine instructor Jim Cleaver is now incorporating this knowledge into research studies. He is working alongside Helfgott Senior Investigator Agatha Colbert on projects ranging from acu-magnet therapy in diabetes, to measuring electrical skin impedance on acupuncture points.

Clinical Informatics

The clinical encounter between the patient and doctor is at the heart of all medicine. It is also a rich source of information that can be used to improve health care if it is collected, managed and appropriately analyzed. Computers and the Internet are overtaking information exchange in health care even among naturopathic and Chinese medicine practitioners. The Helfgott Research Institute is embarking on several projects—a few of which are presented briefly below—to capture and evaluate this clinical data through its developing Center for Clinical Informatics in Natural Medicine.

First, we are working with a student group called ND Partner to survey our colleagues in the naturopathic profession about their use of health information technology and research interests in order to identify clinicians who might be interested in contributing data. We are particularly focused on those who may be using electronic health records (EHR) for charting their cases. We are encouraging the adoption of EHR among licensed naturopathic doctors. We are, however, implementing a variety of channels by which doctors can share their clinical experience.

Secondly, we are developing a Web site for the collection of case reports by naturopathic doctors. Shared case reports have made important contributions to medical progress. Single case reports are of particular relevance due to naturopathic doctors' broad view of the cause of disease, wide variety of treatments, and holistic view of their patients. Case reports offer an efficient way for individual practitioners to begin participating in practice-based research. Doctors will be invited to submit case descriptions from their clinical practice, without identifying information about the patient. Initially, we are targeting cases that represent a notable response to treatment, whether beneficial or adverse, or that suggest a change in current practice. As the collection of case reports builds, they will be analyzed for outcomes associated with different clinical practices. The capacity to accumulate and analyze numerous cases similarly reported can provide insights and documentation of results not possible in the everyday sharing of clinical experience. See the Helfgott Web site for information on case submissions.

More clinical experience and capacity will be accessible via a third Helfgott project. We are exploring a variety of different software platforms for the performance of Web-facilitated clinical trials, case series and comparative effectiveness studies with a national reach. Both patients and doctors will be able to enter data securely on the Web where it will be uploaded for Helfgott data management and analysis.

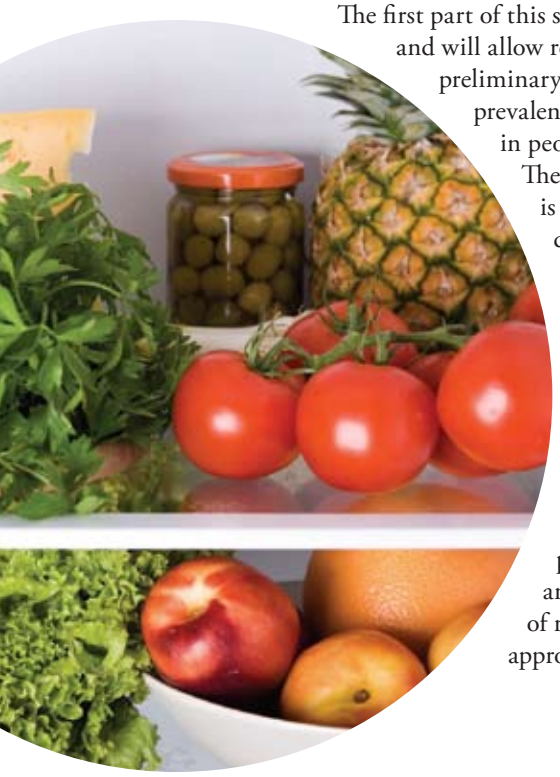
Strength in research is in sample size, so the coordination of data streams—electronic or not—from many doctors, is a key element of building the research capacity to respond to a variety of important clinical questions. Accordingly, Helfgott senior investigator Carlo Calabrese, ND, MPH, is playing a key role in the initiation of a practice-based research network (PBRN) among naturopathic academic centers. The center's first task is the adoption of standards for data structures and coding for the EHR that most schools and many practitioners are adopting. NCNM is also developing a PBRN for Chinese medicine.

Current Research

Going Gluten-Free to Relieve Psoriasis

New research at Helfgott is attempting to find out if a gluten-free diet can help reduce symptoms in people with psoriasis. Food intolerances, such as intolerance to gluten, can cause increases in and activation of immune system cells and cytokines that act locally and circulate systemically in the body. The cytokines that are stimulated by food intolerance can contribute to inflammatory processes and produce negative symptoms. Previous research conducted in Sweden demonstrates that a significant percentage of people with psoriasis (16%) have an intolerance for gliadin, a component of wheat. The simplest way to address food intolerance is to identify the offending food and eliminate it from the diet. Testing blood for antibodies to food antigens provides a quick way to determine potential food intolerances.

Helfgott investigators are conducting a two-part study to further investigate dietary approaches to treating psoriasis. The first part of this study is observational and will allow researchers to collect preliminary evidence of the prevalence of food intolerances in people with psoriasis. The observational study is followed by a pilot dietary intervention to determine if eliminating offending foods can improve psoriasis symptoms. Information gained in this pilot study will be used to design a larger nutritional study for people with psoriasis and create a program of research in nutritional approaches to psoriasis.



Strontium—a New Treatment for Osteoporosis?

The mineral strontium is attracting a great deal of interest as a new treatment for osteoporosis. Osteoporosis is a disease that causes bones to become fragile and more likely to break. Bone fractures associated with osteoporosis can occur anywhere, but are most frequent in the spine, wrist and hip. In 2005 there were more than two million fractures related to osteoporosis—costing nearly $17 billion to treat. By 2025, annual fractures and treatment costs are projected to rise by almost 50%.

Sr

Strontium belongs to the same chemical family as calcium and magnesium and has properties similar to calcium. Ninety-nine percent of the strontium in the human body is in the skeleton. Studies in the United Kingdom have shown that strontium renelate (a pharmaceutical composed of two strontium atoms and one molecule of ranelic acid) slows bone loss while increasing the amount of new bone that is being made. Current pharmaceuticals are only able to do one or the other, but not both. Strontium appears to play a crucial role in bone remodeling, as it tends to migrate to sites where active bone remodeling is taking place.

While strontium renelate is not currently available in the U.S., strontium citrate is available as a dietary supplement. Naturopathic doctor and post-doctoral fellow Jill Edwards is designing a study to look at strontium citrate's effect on bone density. The study will focus on women who are at high-risk for osteoporosis. They will have a bone density scan and will take strontium for one year. A follow-up bone density scan will determine whether strontium has increased their bone density.

Examining Unda Remedies for Fibromyalgia

Helfgott's Clinical Pilot Study of Unda Homeopathic Remedies for Fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) is an initial step in the first formal evaluation of the Unda system for homeopathic remedies as practiced by naturopathic physicians at NCNM and internationally.

Unda remedies are a type of energetic medicine using diluted doses of substances to effect changes in the body and are reportedly effective for both acute ailments and for chronic, degenerative diseases. Unda remedies are intended for use in acute and chronic ailments that could benefit from optimizing excretory functions and enhancing detoxification pathways.

Investigators are applying this treatment approach to FMS, a poorly understood chronic pain condition that is among the most common rheumatologic diagnoses in the United States. Patients affected by FMS may exhibit a range of such symptoms including headache, sleep disturbance, mood disorders and irritable bowel syndrome.

Researchers Dr. Carlo Calabrese and Dr. Dick Thom selected fibromyalgia syndrome as a widely occurring, refractory problem, which may be clinically responsive to the Unda remedies. Participants of the study receive treatment for one month using a fixed combination of three Unda remedies administered daily along with lifestyle exercises, followed by one month of an individualized combination of Unda remedies, and then one month of observation after treatment. The remedies are in combination with four behavioral instructions: increased water intake, dry skin brushing, deep breathing and time outdoors. Later studies will separate the effects of the behavioral interventions and non-specific treatment effects for future investigation.

Gymnema sylvestra for Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome

Post-doctoral fellow Ashley Haywood, ND, MSOM, *LAc* is investigating the potential use of *Gymnema sylvestra* as a natural treatment for Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS). PCOS is a common health problem affecting approximately four to six percent of reproductive-aged women that can cause irregular menstrual cycles, infertility, facial hair, obesity, acne and elevated insulin levels. *Gymnema sylvestra* is an herb from India that has been used for diabetes for centuries and has been gaining popularity as a natural treatment for PCOS. Several studies have demonstrated the efficacy of insulin-sensitizing compounds such as Metformin in reducing the elevated insulin associated with PCOS and diminishing endocrine and metabolic abnormalities found in women with PCOS. Gymnema sylvestra may work in a similar way, and could be used as an alternative to Metformin in PCOS.

The study is a double-blind placebo-controlled study that takes place over eight months, and looks at generally healthy women with PCOS. After a two-month screening period where they learn to track their menstrual cycles, study participants take capsules of either *Gymnema sylvestra* or a placebo twice a day for six months. Hormones, menstrual cycles and markers of insulin metabolism are measured. Results from the study are expected in fall 2010 and will be used to design a much larger clinical trial looking at the role of blood sugar regulation and its effects on fertility in women with PCOS.

High-Impact Student Research

If there was ever any doubt that student research can make a difference, the work of a group of fourth-year NCNM students is proof that it can. Naturopathic students Jeremy Mikolai, Andrew Erlandsen and Andrew Murison have embarked on a program of research that has taken them from the lab bench to national conferences, all in the first three years of their medical education. Their research is focused on the immunological effects of an Ayurvedic herb called Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*) that has been used for centuries in India. Ashwagandha is one of thousands of herbs that are thought to have immunological effects, but very few have been rigorously studied.

During their first year, Jeremy, Andrew and Andrew developed a pilot study to investigate what effect Ashwagandha has on the immune system. Traditionally, Ayurvedic herbs are taken with another substance, or "anupana." The students wanted to test the herb as it would traditionally be taken, so study participants took Ashwagandha with milk and then had their blood analyzed to see how this affected their immune system. The three students spent a year designing this study, applying for human subjects ethical review, recruiting participants and carrying out the study, all while undergoing the rigors of their first year of medical school.

At the start of their second year, the group had collected enough data to begin analysis. They found that study participants' immune cells were significantly more activated after four days of taking the herb and anupana. The results were in hand, but Jeremy, Andrew and Andrew didn't stop there. Over the next two years, the three wrote up their results, got them published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, and presented them at multiple conferences all over the country. They won awards for their research, including one for "Best Student Research" at the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians' annual conference and a first place prize at the 6th annual Natural Supplements: An Evidence-Based Update conference, sponsored by the Scripps Center for Integrative Medicine. Now, as they enter their fourth year of school, the group is finishing their second investigation, a follow-up study comparing the effects of Ashwagandha and anupana on the immune system to placebo and milk-only controls in a larger group of people.

For some members of the group, research projects won't end at graduation. Two of the three are looking forward to launching careers as physician-researchers after they get their degrees. For more information on the Ashwagandha study, see "In Vivo Effects of Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*) Extract on the Activation of Lymphocytes" in the April 2009 issue of the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*.

"The opportunities I have had at NCNM and Helfgott have been beyond what I could have imagined."

–Jeremy Mikolai, ND4

Student Researchers

Sara Love

Sara is a fourth year ND student who has been working in student research since starting school at NCNM. During her first year, Sara wrote a case study that has been published in volume 4 of the *International Journal of Naturopathic Medicine* highlighting naturopathic treatments for chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy. She is currently working on a pilot study comparing two naturopathic therapies to prescription medication for the treatment of chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy. Working with medical oncologists and oncology researchers, Sara hopes to find ways to manage the side effects of chemotherapy while supporting the patient throughout their treatments.

Sara is also a pharmacy technician who has experience in an inpatient pharmacy as well as educating other technicians. After graduation, Sara plans to pursue board certification in naturopathic oncology. She will continue to work in research with natural therapeutics for use in patients undergoing chemotherapy.

Andrew Litchy

Andrew Litchy is a third year ND student who has been investigating the physiological effects of meditation training and energetic bodywork with Helfgott Investigator Agatha Colbert, MD. Andrew recently completed a study to determine if meditation training can alter heart rate variability patterns (a measure of the heart's ability to adapt to changing circumstances). He also investigated heart rate dynamics in a healing session, comparing the simultaneous interactions of healer and the healee during energetic bodywork sessions conducted by Joan Hamilton, PhD.

Andrew is currently developing a 12-week meditation training program focusing on development of insight and tranquility as described in classical Buddhist meditation texts. This program will be implemented in an upcoming study that will include personality measures to gain understanding into individual differences in training response. Andrew is also preparing for a larger investigation into the heart rate dynamics of energetic bodywork involving multiple healers and a larger population of participants.

Kacy Borba

Kacy Borba is a third year dual degree student, who has dedicated much of her time at NCNM to a range of Helfgott projects. Currently, she is working on a study in partnership with Natural Doctors International on the use of guava in treatment of infectious diarrhea in Nicaragua. She and her team hope to establish guava as an effective and inexpensive, locally producible treatment in developing tropical countries where diarrheal diseases are endemic. In addition, Kacy contributes to a project to develop a practice-based research network in naturopathic medicine, as well as an effort to create a health equity survey at NCNM.

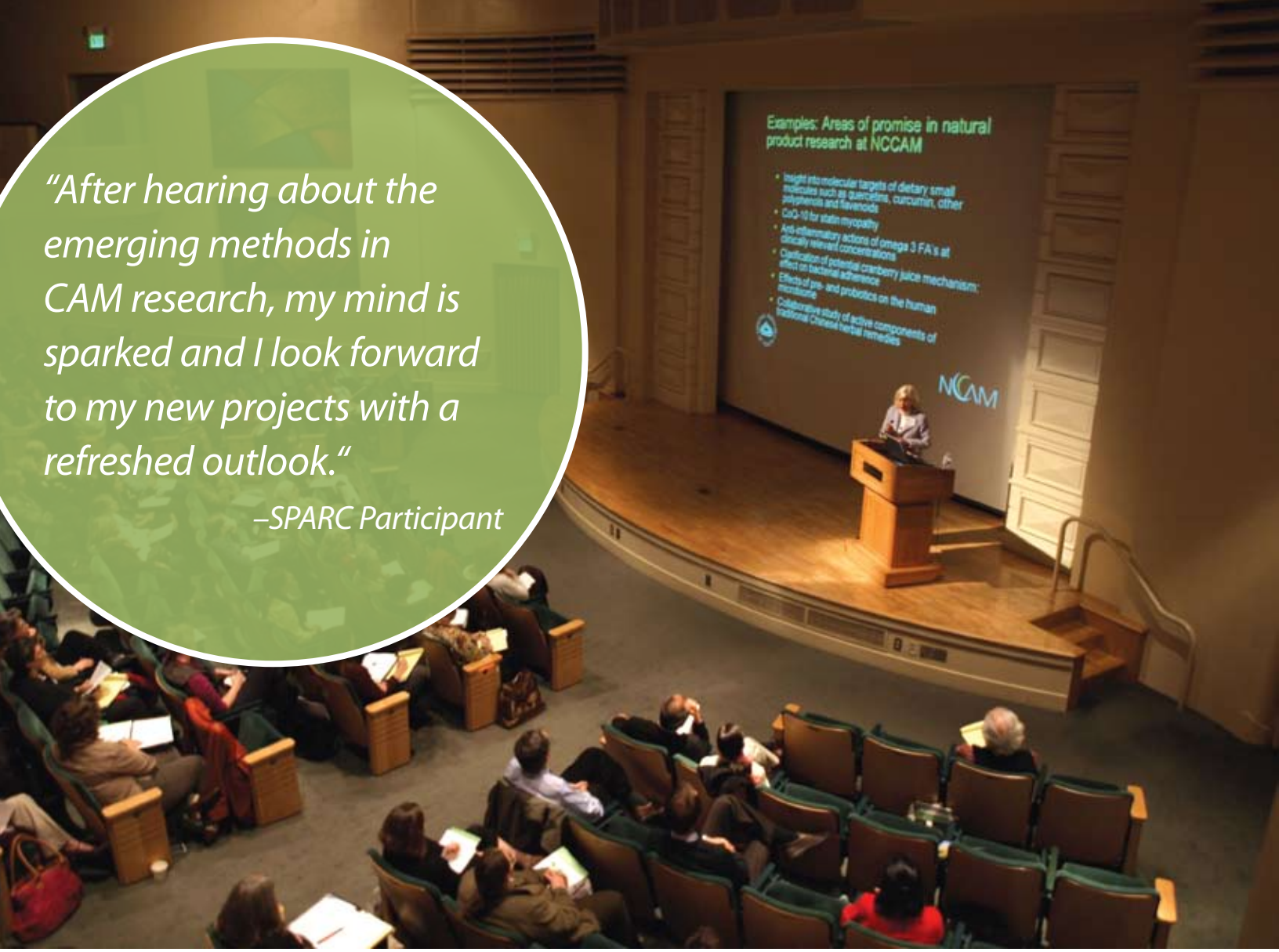
Kacy graduated in 2004 from the University of California in Santa Cruz with a B.A. in a major she put together herself called Community Health Care. Originally from California, where her family raises bucking bulls, Kacy has also taken residence in Montana, Costa Rica and now Oregon. In addition to her work at Helfgott, she is an active participant in student groups, including Natural Doctors International and Students A.W.A.R.E. (Actively Working to Advance Real Equity).

Global Collaborations

Tanzania

The East African country of Tanzania is one of the poorest in the world and has a serious shortage of medical personnel. While there are more traditional healers than conventional MDs in Tanzania, the training and skills of traditional healers are varied. Helfgott Director Heather Zwickey traveled to Tanzania twice in the past year to set up several relationships in Tanzania, including the Tanga AIDS Working Group and the Institute for Traditional Medicine at Muhimbili University. Dr. Zwickey hopes to develop a number of programs with these institutions in the next few years, including a student exchange, to learn about traditional healing methods and to help the organizations further develop laboratory capabilities.

In addition, Helfgott has teamed up with an Oregon-based non-profit called Africa Bridge to help develop a scientific manuscript on childhood stunting in the Mbeya region of Tanzania. Africa Bridge volunteer Corey McAuliffe spent part of her six-month stint in southwestern Tanzania collecting height and weight data from children under five years old. After she returned, Helfgott staff helped her develop and write up her data for publication. Dr. Zwickey continues to collaborate with Africa Bridge on projects in the region.



"After hearing about the emerging methods in CAM research, my mind is sparked and I look forward to my new projects with a refreshed outlook."

–SPARC Participant

Conferences

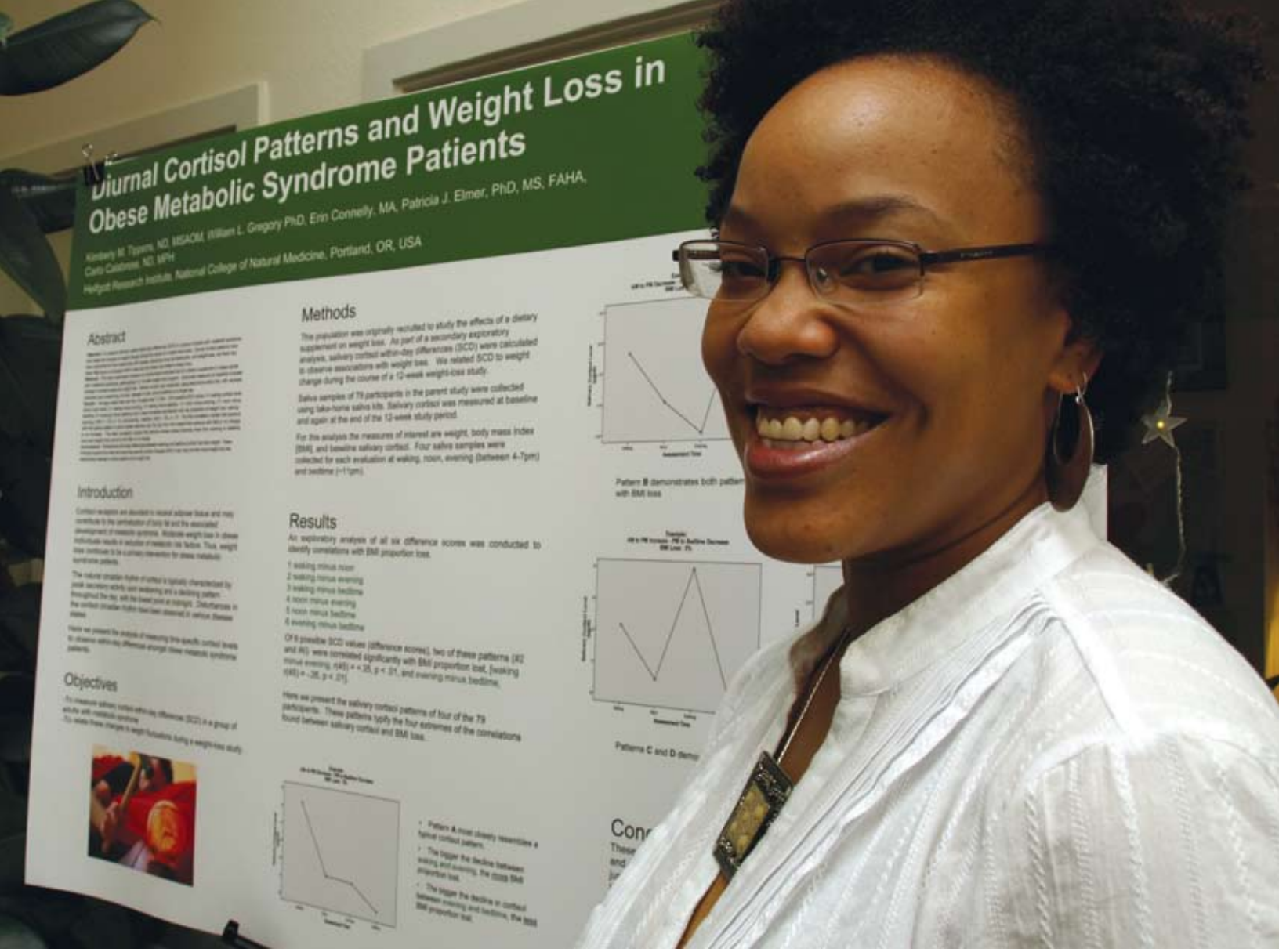
2009 Symposium for Portland Area Research on Complementary & Alternative Medicine

Portland is a hotspot of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) research, in part because of the wealth of local educational institutions that focus on naturopathic, Chinese medicine, chiropractic and biomedicine. Each spring, the Portland CAM research community gathers to present new research findings, discuss promising avenues for research, and create further collaborations at the Symposium for Portland Area Research in Complementary and Alternative Medicine, or SPARC.

At SPARC, investigators and clinicians from Helfgott Research Institute at the National College of Natural Medicine, the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine, the Oregon Health and Science University, Western States Chiropractic College, and Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research come together to share their research. In 2009, SPARC showcased research on magnets for carpel tunnel syndrome, chiropractic manipulation for low back pain, fish oil for Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease, and new methods for measuring how patients experience their medical encounters. In addition, the afternoon featured workshops on herbal medicines and CAM research education.

SPARC was thrilled to host keynote speaker, Josephine Briggs, MD, Director of the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine at the National Institutes of Health. Dr. Briggs reported that the majority of Americans use CAM therapies to treat pain. She also cited studies that list meditation as the most used CAM therapy. In addition to studies that demonstrate efficacy, Dr. Briggs suggested that researchers need to identify better biomarkers so that we know when therapies are working.

From modest beginnings, SPARC has grown bigger and better each year, and is becoming a yearly highlight for the Portland CAM research community. Don't miss SPARC 2010, which is scheduled for Saturday, April 17, 2010.



North American Research Conference on Complementary & Integrative Medicine

What happens when you collect the world's top CAM researchers and practitioners into a four-day think tank? You get the 2009 North American Research Conference on Complementary & Integrative Medicine (NARCCIM) conference, held in Minneapolis, Minnesota. NARCCIM was filled with national and international CAM pioneers working toward one goal: to form collaborations and to promote scientific discovery and health. The results of the event are not surprising, as it single-handedly served to propel CAM research well into the forefront of integrative medicine.

Influential presentations for the event ranged from symposiums detailing the biological, neurological, cognitive and psychological aspects of CAM research to workshops aimed at calculating innovative strategies for CAM and evidence-based research. Dr. Richard Hammerschlag, research director of the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine, playfully pushed perceptions surrounding sham acupuncture and current methods to measure its effects. Harvard professor, Dr. Ted Kaptchuk and his post-doctoral students, elucidated potential neurological mechanisms in the brain for the notorious placebo effect. Dr. Heather Zwickey teamed up with conventional and CAM communities to determine what are the most effective methods that researchers can employ to collect meaningful information for the clinical and academic settings.

NCNM and Helfgott were strongly represented at NARCCIM, presenting their research through posters and presentations, attending career workshops, and networking with leaders in the integrative medicine field. Eight student researchers had a strong student-presence at NARCCIM, seven of whom received scholarships as a courtesy from the Consortium of Academic Health Centers for Integrative Medicine and the Academic Consortium for Complementary and Alternative Health Care. Six Vanguard Faculty members, four senior investigators, two post-doctoral fellows and three project coordinators also participated at NARCCIM, demonstrating NCNM's commitment to the integration of research into both the naturopathic and Chinese medicine curriculum.

Gifts to the Helfgott Research Institute are used to fund innovative clinical research in natural medicine. Past donations have been used to purchase valuable equipment for research laboratories, launch new pilot studies, and recruit new investigators to Helfgott. At a time when budgets are becoming tighter and support from the National Institutes of Health is less certain, private gifts can make an enormous difference. If you can contribute to Helfgott this year, we will be grateful for your support. Log on to www.helfgott.org to make a donation.


"I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver."
–Maya Angelou

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