

## Five Botanical Research Centers Funded

Editorial Staff

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) and the Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS) have co-funded five dietary supplement research centers that will focus specifically on botanical products. Research conducted by the new centers will investigate the safety, efficacy, and mechanisms of action of various botanicals.

"Given that millions of Americans are using natural products, these research centers are critical to helping us determine whether and by what mechanisms botanicals may serve as effective treatments or preventive approaches," commented NCCAM Director Stephen Straus, MD. "The five centers we are funding will investigate the use of a variety of widely consumed botanicals, from flaxseed to tarragon, for a range of diseases and conditions that affect many Americans."

Added ODS Director Paul Coates, PhD: "In 1999, NIH developed a botanical research center initiative with major research institutions across the nation. These five centers will continue to fulfill the goal of this initiative to foster interdisciplinary collaborative research ... to identify potential health benefits and to develop a systematic evaluation of the safety and the effectiveness of botanicals, particularly those available as dietary supplements."

### The Botanical Center for Age-Related Diseases

Researchers at this center will investigate the health effects of polyphenols from sources such as soy and kudzu, with specific evaluation of their ability to prevent and treat common age-related conditions (osteoporosis, cognitive decline, cataracts, etc.).

### Botanical Dietary Supplements for Women's Health

At this center, researchers will focus their efforts on herbal supplements that have potential implications for women's health issues. One clinical trial already underway is investigating whether black cohosh and red clover can help relieve symptoms of menopause.

### Botanicals and Metabolic Syndrome

Russian tarragon and grape seed are two of the botanicals that will be studied at this center. Investigators will evaluate the potential influence of these extracts on molecular and cellular processes associated with metabolic syndrome.

### MSKCC Research Center for Botanical Immunomodulators

Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center is one of four partner institutions at this center, which will investigate botanicals such as echinacea, astragalus, turmeric, and maitake. Specifically, researchers will assess whether these botanicals' reported ability to influence immune function has relevance to the treatment of cancer and infectious disease.

### Wake Forest and Harvard Center for Botanical Lipids

The biological mechanisms and clinical applications of botanical-derived polyunsaturated fatty acids will be a primary focus of this center. Studies will investigate the anti-inflammatory actions of flaxseed, echium, borage and other botanicals, with specific emphasis on whether they can be used to prevent and treat inflammatory conditions.

*Source*

- NCCAM and ODS co-fund five botanical research centers. National Institutes of Health news release, April 7, 2005.