

THE NCAHF BULLETIN BOARD

MAY / JUNE 2001

The NCAHF Bulletin Board is sent to members and media recipients only. It is intended to stimulate and aid in activism against health fraud, misinformation and quackery at the local, state & national levels.

NCAHF VICE PRESIDENT HONORED

On March 30, Stephen Barrett, M.D., received the American Association for Health Education's 2001 Distinguished Service Award "in recognition of outstanding contributions to the health and well-being of mankind through health education." AAHE represents more than 7,500 health educators and health-promotion specialists. The award is presented annually to one or more organizations or individuals outside of the health education profession. Since 1975, 28 organizations and five other individuals have received it.

A profile of Dr. Barrett, "The Man Who Loves to Bust Quacks," appeared in the May 7th issue of *Time* magazine.

NCAHF'S E-MAIL NEWSLETTER A SUCCESS

Consumer Health Digest, our free, weekly e-mail newsletter on consumer protection and decision-making issues had 2,277 subscribers for its 23rd issue published on June 4th. The number of subscribers has been increasing at a rate of about 100 per week. To subscribe, log on at <http://www.ncahf.org/digest/chd.html>. All issues are archived at <http://www.ncahf.org/digest/index.html>.

NCAHF SEEKS PLANNED GIVING

Gifts to NCAHF are tax-deductible. The tax savings depend upon the type of asset donated. Gifts may include cash. Gifts of securities or property can often greatly reduce or eliminate capital gains and estate taxes.

A carefully planned gift can introduce income and estate tax benefits. Donors may find advantages of life income gifts such as charitable gift annuities and trusts, or ways to include a bequest to NCAHF in their estate plans. Anyone interested in exploring the benefits of a planned gift is encouraged to contact President William M. London, NCAHF, PO Box 141, Fort Lee, NJ 07024; 201-723-2955; ncahf@att.net.

HARVARD RECEIVES \$10 MILLION TO STUDY 'NON-TRADITIONAL' MEDICINE

The Bernard Osher Foundation, founded by Maine businessman Bernard Osher, has made a \$10 million grant to the new Harvard Medical School Division for Research and Education in Complementary and Integrative Medicine. Associate Professor of Medicine David M. Eisenberg directs the division. The School plans to use the money to establish a new institute to study 'non-traditional' medicine and to set up the Bernard Osher Chair in Complementary and Integrative Medical Therapies, a tenured professorship.

"We need to evaluate scientifically the effectiveness of these techniques—to assess the current status of our knowledge and determine what we need to do to advance that knowledge," said Dr. Joseph B. Martin, dean of the School.

[Source: *Harvard Crimson*, Harvard University, May 1, 2000.]

MISSISSIPPI ATTORNEY GENERAL ACTS AGAINST 'CURE-ALL'

Police served a cease and desist order from the Mississippi General's Office on Dallas Dupre in Mississippi to stop soliciting MGN-3, a patented combination of rice bran and shiitake mushroom extracts, as a cure for any cancer and treatment for other ailments. The order was issued under the Mississippi Consumer Protection Act.

MGN-3 is manufactured by Lane Labs-USA which promotes it as having immune-enhancing properties. FDA filed a lawsuit against Lane Labs in December 1999 to stop marketing of MGN-3 and two other products promoted as effective against cancer: the shark cartilage product BeneFin and the cream SkinAnswer.

Stephen Barrett, MD's paper "MGN-3: A Skeptical Look" is available at <http://www.quackwatch.com/01QuackeryRelatedTopics/Cancer/mgn3.html>.

SUPREME COURT ALLOWS MEDICARE/MEDICAID PAYMENT TO CHRISTIAN SCIENCE FACILITIES

In April the U.S. Supreme Court turned down an appeal by Children's Health is a Legal Duty (CHILD) of a ruling from the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals allowing Medicare and Medicaid payments to Christian Science nursing homes and other "religious nonmedical healthcare institutions." Under a law passed by Congress in 1997, custodial care, but not prayer, is reimbursed in facilities that administer only nonmedical services because of religious reasons. The Iowa Medical Society (IMS), American Medical Association, and American Academy of Pediatrics, and other medical organizations had filed a brief supporting CHILD's appeal.

[Sources: Albert T. Supreme Court upholds pay to Christian Science health facilities. *American Medical News* (online version), 4/23/01 & 4/30/01. A misguided law on faith healing and its legacy survive. *American Medical News* (online version), 5/7/01.]

MARTIN GARDNER ON DISTANT HEALER ELISABETH TARG, MD

Noted skeptic Martin Gardner reviews background and recent activities of Elisabeth Targ, MD in the March/April 2001 issue of *Skeptical Inquirer*. Targ, a psychiatrist, is the acting director of the Complementary Medicine Research Institute of the California Pacific Medical Center, a part of the University of California School of Medicine. She is convinced that most studies of distant healing has shown significant effects. She has received \$800,000 from the Department of Defense for research on "alternative" methods for healing breast cancer. The National Institutes of Health National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) has given her \$243,228 for the first year of a three-year study of distant healing on patients infected with HIV. NCCAM gave her another \$202,596 for the first year of a four-year project to study the effect of distant healing on persons with glioblastoma, a type of brain tumor.

Dr. Targ follows in the footsteps of her father Russell Targ, a parapsychist who claimed people were capable of "remote viewing" (clairvoyance) and that Uri Geller could move objects with his mind. Russell wrote uncritically about the alleged powers of Arigo, Brazil's famous "psychic surgeon" who "operated with his 'rusty knife' on thousands of patients, following instructions whispered in his left ear by a dead German physician."

FDA WARNS COMPANIES ABOUT HERBAL ADDITIVES IN FOODS

In June the U.S. Food and Drug Administration sent warning letters to three companies: (Hansen Beverage Company, US Mills, and Fresh Samantha, which is owned by Odwalla, Inc.) that put herbal additives in food and drink products. The letters warn that their products could be illegal because the ingredients might not be generally recognized as safe. FDA plans to send out letters to additional companies [Reuters report in *The New York Times* on the Web, 6/7/01.]

A May 27th front-page article in *The New York Times* identified companies that are adding into drink products various herbs that are not necessarily safe or effective as promoted. Herbs added to various drinks include ginkgo biloba, guarana, ginseng, St. John's wort, echinacea, and kava. Products containing herbal additives include Arizona Memory Herbal Tonic, SoBe Wisdom, SoBe Green Tea 3G, SoBe Adrenaline Rush, Anheuser-Busch's 180, Coca Cola's KMX, Snapple Fire, SoBe Love Bs Brew, Fresh Samantha Oh Happy Day, Vitamin Water, Fresh Samantha Super Juice, SoBe Lizard Blizzard, Snapple Moon Green Tea, Celestial Seasonings Tension Tamer, and SoBe Karma. Manufacturers are promoting these products as having various health benefits (e.g., memory enhancement, immune system enhancement, energy lift) beyond their nutritional value.

MANSLAUGHTER CHARGES AGAINST UNLICENSED NURSE USING UNAPPROVED CANCER TREATMENT

Joyce Brown, 52, of Kelso, Washington faces a charge of first-degree manslaughter in the death of Edward Steward, 52, a cancer patient from New Orleans she hooked up to an IV to administer a mineral water product called MICOM. Word of mouth led Steward, who had colon cancer, to Brown. According to investigative reports, Brown continued to give Steward the treatment even after he complained of chest pains and chills; then his wife Stephanie had to urge Brown, a nurse without an active license at the time, to revive him.

Brown treated a brain-cancer patient the same day whose reaction to the treatment was similar to that of Steward. Brown had to take the patient to a hospital. The medical examiner found that the MICOM had been filtered through rags and had been bacterially contaminated.

Brown has pleaded not guilty and faces trial in July.

The creator of MICOM, Bob Simpson, claims to be a molecular physicist and the son of an Indian medicine man. MICOM is a mineral water. Simpson met Reynoldo Maldonado, a Mexican inventor of medical devices, who worked with him on product distribution. Clinics in Mexico began using MICOM as an IV cancer treatment.

[Source: Sunde S. Cancer 'cure' ended in death. Seattle Post-Intelligencer Reporter (Online Edition), 5/14/01.]

Additional note: A page on the Simpson Advanced Sciences Web site indicates that the mineral water is now known as

Sundance Natchez Mineral Water in the U.S.A. Claims made on the page about the product for administration to individuals with various health problems are not backed by scientific evidence.

CALLS FOR SCIENTIFIC STANDARDS MADE AT WHCCAM PUBLIC FORUMS

The White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine (WHCCAM) has held a series of public meetings initiated July 13, 2000. It has heard testimony from promoters of questionable methods. It has also heard from people who claim that various "complementary" and "alternative" methods cannot be studied through controlled tests. Testimony has also been offered by supporters of NCAHF's position that the scientific process is essential for discovering truths and validating health claims and information. Three more meetings for 2001 have been announced: July 2-3, October 4-5, and December 6-7. Agendas and transcripts of meetings are available at the WHCCAM Web site at <http://www.whccamp.hhs.gov/meetings/index.cfm>.

Paul Kurtz, PhD spoke at a WHCCAM public forum in December on behalf of the Committee for the Scientific Claims of the Paranormal. Dr. Kurtz spoke against integrating CAM with "conventional" medicine. His written responses to questions the Commission provided to him beforehand were published in the May/June issue of *Skeptical Inquirer*. He said that "we should insist that the public be safeguarded against unproven cures, untested therapies, and quackery by practitioners and manufacturers out to make a profit."

On May 15th NCAHF President William M. London spoke to the Commission as part of a three-person panel on addressing "Concerns About CAM and CAM Research." Also on the panel were Simeon Margolis, MD, Professor of Medicine and Biological Chemistry at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and Arthur Grollman, MD, Evelyn Glick Professor and Chair of Pharmacological Sciences at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Dr. London raised concerns about health fraud masquerading as "complementary" and "alternative." He noted that many proponents of "alternative" medicine are traditional and adhere to orthodoxy. He pointed out the need to discard treatments that fail to pass scientific tests. Dr. Margolis and Dr. Grollman called for revision of the Dietary Supplement and Health Education Act of 1994 so that manufacturers of CAM products must establish safety and efficacy prior to marketing. Dr. Margolis also discussed research on EDTA chelation therapy in the treatment of various cardiovascular problems. He said, "Quite frankly, I cannot believe how any practitioner who is truly interested in the welfare of his patients can continue to practice chelation therapy."

Statements to the Commission by Dr. London and Dr. Margolis are posted at the NCAHF Web site.

FLORIDA SUPREME COURT OVERTURNS INSURANCE FRAUD CONVICTION

On May 31st the Florida Supreme Court overturned the conviction of Fort Lauderdale chiropractor Charles Bradford for soliciting car crash victims. The court ruled 7-0 that statutes outlawing solicitation violated Bradford's free speech rights. Bradford recruited patients through Preback Consultants, which he paid up to \$300 for each crash victim who took the offer. Under Florida law, crash victims are entitled to up to \$10,000 in medical benefits from insurance companies.

[*Sun-Sentinel* (Ft. Lauderdale) report at <http://www.fraudnews.com>.]