

NIH Launches Alternative Medicine Database

Editorial Staff

For many people, finding reliable information on acupuncture, herbal remedies and other forms of alternative medicine can be a daunting task. The National Institutes of Health recently made that task dramatically easier for researchers and practitioners by creating "CAM on PubMed," a database of more than 220,000 references and abstracts to scientific articles on alternative medicine available for free on the Internet.

CAM on PubMed is a joint partnership of the National Center for Complementary of Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) and the National Library of Medicine (NLM). PubMed is the online version of Medline, a health information database maintained by the National Library of Medicine. According to NIH, approximately 120,000 people visit PubMed each day, with about 700 searches conducted each minute.

"This is an important and exciting undertaking," enthused NCCAM director Dr. Stephen E. Straus. "The opportunity to join forces with the world's largest resource for biomedical literature represents a major step in mainstreaming CAM research information."

"This joint venture will offer health professionals, CAM practitioners, researchers, educators and consumers ready access to a comprehensive database of journal citations directly related to complementary and alternative medicine," added Dr. Donald A.B. Lindberg, the National Library of Medicine's director. "Through CAM on PubMed, NLM and NCCAM are providing a highly visible, easily identifiable portal to the evolving field of CAM research publications."

To access the database, users can visit the NCCAM's website (www.nccam.nih.gov) and click on the CAM on PubMed link. Clicking on the link will take users directly to the database to conduct a search.

Once at the database, users can enter a specific term (e.g., "acupressure" or "tai chi") in the search box, then click on the "Go" button. Users can also refine their search by pressing the "Limits" button and entering information such as publication dates, language, or type of publication, prior to performing a search.

Conducting a search will most likely return multiple references, with article titles and links to related articles displayed on a results page. Clicking the title of an article will bring up an abstract. Many references also contain links to a journal's website or provide instructions on downloading or ordering the full text of an article.

For first-time visitors, the database has its own tutorial, which can be accessed at www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/pubmed_tutorial/m1001.html. In addition, the NIH has issued a question-and-answer page at www.nih.gov/news/pr/feb2001/nccam-05a.html to help make users' experiences more enjoyable.

Approximately 4,500 peer-reviewed journals are currently indexed on PubMed, including the *American Journal of Acupuncture*, the *American Journal of Chinese Medicine*, and the *Journal of*

Alternative and Complementary Medicine. The NLM's advisory committee has begun evaluating more CAM-specific titles so they can be added to PubMed's complementary medicine database. Library technical staff will also maintain the CAM section of the database, and will provide customer service to users.

JUNE 2001