



 UNT HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER

Position on the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine Draft Strategic Plan August 30, 2010

The Osteopathic Research Center (ORC) strongly endorses the mission, vision, and strategic objectives of the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) Draft Strategic Plan (DSP) of August 30, 2010.

As the premier institute focused on osteopathic research, the ORC conducts and supports research on osteopathic clinical practices that transcend the artificial boundaries between “conventional” and “complementary and alternative medicine (CAM).” The NCCAM mission and vision are concordant with the osteopathic profession’s focus on primary care and a patient-centered approach. Additionally, DSP strategic objective 2 supports the ORC’s overall research agenda.

Recent data from the National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NAMCS) confirm that osteopathic physicians (DOs) provide more than 20% of primary care visits in the specialty of family or general medicine, often integrating mind/body and manipulative/manual approaches in their management of patients. The NCCAM DSP supports research efforts within the osteopathic profession, particularly in the “real world” setting wherein CAM modalities, such as osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT), are integrated using a “hands-on” approach to health care delivery and health promotion.

Data from NAMCS also indicate that DOs treat patients with musculoskeletal conditions, such as low back pain, disproportionately more often than allopathic physicians (MDs). This is particularly true for patients with chronic pain. Further, DOs are less likely to rely on prescription drugs in their management of such patients. The ORC’s emerging Consortium for Collaborative Osteopathic Research Development (CONCORD) Practice-Based Research Network (PBRN) is poised to conduct research that addresses the issue of chronic low back pain in the real world (consistent with DSP strategic objective 3). The NCCAM DSP ensures that federal funds are available to support such initiatives, which are vital in addressing the burden of suffering and costs to society associated with low back pain. Moreover, the CONCORD-PBRN has a fellowship training component for osteopathic physicians who wish to engage in patient-oriented research (consistent with DSP strategic objective 4).

Historically, there truly has been a substantial “payoff” from previous NCCAM investments in osteopathic research at the ORC, particularly as these investments have been leveraged by additional support from osteopathic professional organizations and foundations, including the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation. This year, these investments resulted in a publication in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, which describes the potential benefits of integrating OMT with conventional obstetrical care. Also this year, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality accepted the first osteopathic clinical practice guideline, based primarily on ORC research involving OMT for low back pain, on its National Guideline Clearinghouse. Later this year, the ORC anticipates completing its five-year OSTEOPATHIC Trial, one of the largest randomized clinical trials involving any type of manipulative treatment. All of these achievements are consistent with DSP strategic objective 5, to develop and disseminate objective, evidence-based information on CAM interventions.

As a minor comment, the ORC recommends that the NCCAM DSP avoids use of “chiropractic” (as an adjective or noun) when describing the CAM area of manipulative and body-based practices (e.g., page 17). Such use of “chiropractic” may give the erroneous impression that only chiropractors engage in manipulative and body-based practices.