



In Memoriam: Mary Frances Picciano, PhD, 1946-2010

Mary Frances Picciano, Senior Nutrition Research Scientist at the Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS), died on August 29 of cancer. The staff of ODS mourns the loss of our valued colleague who was a proficient researcher, skilled educator, and fun-loving friend. She is survived by her husband, John Milner, PhD, Chief of the Nutritional Science Research Group, Division of Cancer Prevention, National Cancer Institute, and her daughter, son, mother, and two brothers.

ODS Director Paul Coates speaks for our office with his words: "Mary Frances was that remarkable combination of gifted scientist, committed teacher, and beautiful person whom you meet only now and then. She was always a strong proponent of bringing the best science to bear on our work, and nowhere was this more evident than with vitamin D."

Dr. Picciano first came to ODS in 1999 as a Visiting Scientist, then joined ODS in 2001 as a Senior Research Scientist and Director of the ODS Training and Career Development Program. Among her innovations was creation of an ODS Research Seminar Series as well as the Dietary Supplement Research Practicum, a five-day annual course to provide fundamental scientific knowledge of dietary supplements to academicians and their advanced students. Dr. Picciano also directed the ODS Vitamin D Initiative, a comprehensive, multifaceted effort to synthesize available research on this nutrient, identify research needs and challenges, and evaluate their application to public health policy. Earlier this year she received the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director's Award "in recognition of exceptional leadership resulting in a broader understanding of vitamin D that will benefit the public health."

During her career, Dr. Picciano collaborated with dozens of investigators on scientific projects covering the full range of human nutrition science from very basic studies through human clinical trials. According to Dr. Johanna Dwyer, Senior Scientist at ODS and a long-time friend and colleague, "Mary Frances was remarkably bright and generous, yet intellectually humble in spite of her encyclopedic knowledge of the field, and a great joy to work with."

Prior to joining ODS, Mary Frances Picciano was a Professor of Nutrition at Pennsylvania State University and, earlier, Professor of Nutrition in Medicine at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research interests emphasized nutrition

and dietary requirements for pregnant women, infants, and children. She was a member of several professional organizations, numerous advisory boards and review panels, and on the editorial boards of four journals. Dr. Picciano co-authored a textbook titled *Human Nutrition* and co-edited two other books in her areas of research. She served on the National Academy of Science's Subcommittee on Nutrition During Lactation and was President of the International Society for Research in Human Milk and Lactation.

Dr. Picciano was especially proud of opportunities to mentor graduate students during her career and to follow their careers in academia and in the public and private sectors. "I am continually impressed with the substantial weight keen mentoring imparts on career choices and sustained professional achievement," she wrote. Among her protégés is Dr. Regan Bailey who was a doctoral student at Penn State, a postdoctoral research fellow at ODS in 2007-2009, and now a nutritional epidemiologist at ODS. "Mary Frances is one of a kind," remembers Dr. Bailey. "As a mentor, she not only imparted her scientific influence but also was a supportive, nurturing friend willing to go the extra mile to help. She worked tirelessly to promote learning opportunities for young scientists."

Earlier this year, Dr. Picciano received the David Kritchevsky Career Achievement Award in Nutrition from the American Society for Nutrition "in recognition of an outstanding career in nutrition." She was also awarded the 2010 Macy-Gyorgy Award from the International Society for Research in Human Milk and Lactation for "outstanding, original scientific contributions to the study of human milk and lactation."

"Outstanding" and "original" are truly words to describe Mary Frances Picciano as both a scientist and person. According to her friend and colleague, Dr. Elizabeth Yetley, "Mary Frances was a determined and effective proponent of sound science in the furtherance of public health nutrition, often having to delve into scientific areas that were new to her to fully develop the scientific basis for a public health issue. This is a rare, but much needed, commitment from a member of the scientific community, and her efforts were remarkably effective and much appreciated." Here at ODS, we will miss Mary Frances dearly, treasure the opportunities we had to work and socialize with her, and remember her as a shining star in the life of our office.

News You Can Use

Consumer Versions of Fact Sheets for 6 Nutrients Now Available

ODS provides an extensive collection of fact sheets on dietary supplement ingredients on its Web site, including nutrients, some botanicals, and supplements like omega-3 fatty acids. In most cases they are directed to health professionals, as they provide a detailed, comprehensive overview of the dietary supplement and include supporting references to the original biomedical literature. Now, for six nutrients -- Vitamins B12, C, D, E, and calcium and zinc -- two consumer-friendly versions of each are available, called Consumer and QuickFacts. Over time, ODS intends to make all of its fact sheets available in three versions: Health Professional, Consumer, and QuickFacts.

The Consumer fact sheet is written for the health-conscious layperson without a background in nutrition or medicine. In approximately 4-6 pages, it takes a “just-the-facts” approach in providing information and advice without extensive detail and background. Information is provided in a question and answer format. Scientific terms are highlighted and linked to definitions. A busy health professional who wants a short review of a specific dietary supplement may also find this version of value.

The QuickFacts version provides a 2-page, very easy-to-read overview of a dietary supplement ingredient. Like the Consumer version, information is provided in a question and answer format, and scientific terms are highlighted and linked to a definition.

ODS fact sheets are available at: <http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets>. When you click a link for a supplement ingredient (such as vitamin E) that provides three versions of its fact sheet, the Web page you are taken to contains a link for each version.

Fact sheets can be read online or printed. An option is now available to print the QuickFacts version in an attractively formatted PDF version. PDF versions of the Consumer fact sheets will be available soon. Groups that provide health and nutrition education, for example, may wish to print these PDFs in quantity for distribution at their events.

ODS Programs and Activities

Five NIH Botanical Research Centers Funded for 2011-2015

Studies to advance the understanding of how botanicals may affect human health will be conducted at five academic interdisciplinary centers as part of a new (third) cycle of funding of the [Botanical Research Centers \(BRC\) Program](#) for the years 2011-2015.

The BRCs are jointly funded by the ODS and the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), two components of the National Institutes of Health. The NIH National Cancer Institute (NCI) will co-support two of these five centers—the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the University of Missouri. Each center has been awarded approximately \$1.5 million each per year for five years. Three of the five centers are renewals in that they received funding in the last 5-year cycle. The five centers are:

- Pennington Biomedical Research Center, Baton Rouge, LA
Primary focus: botanicals and metabolic syndrome
(Supported in 2005-2010)
- University of Illinois at Chicago
Primary focus: botanicals for women’s health
(Supported in 1999-2004 and 2005-2010)

- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Primary focus: botanical estrogens and women's health
- University of Missouri
Primary focus: botanical interactions with biochemical signaling pathways
- Wake Forest University Health Sciences, Winston-Salem, NC
Primary focus: botanical oils and effects on immunity and inflammation
(Supported in 2005-2010)

The BRCs study the safety, effectiveness, and biological action of botanical products. Botanical supplements are among the most popular dietary supplements, and their use appears to be on the rise. Research from these centers should help the public make better informed decisions about the use of botanical supplements.

**ODS Workshop on Economic Analysis of Nutrition Interventions:
*Meeting Summary and Presentation Slides Now Available Online***

ODS held a workshop, February 23-24, 2010, *Economic Analysis of Nutrition Interventions: Methods, Research, and Policy*, co-sponsored by the NIH National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, National Cancer Institute, and National Institute for Nursing Research. Over two days, U.S. and international academicians, researchers, policy makers, and regulators addressed the following issues with respect to nutrition interventions:

- State of the science: What health economic methods are used to judge the burden of illness, interventions, or health care policies? What new research methodologies are available or needed?
- Research applications: What evidence-based health economic research activities in nutrition are ongoing or planned in the federal government?
- Regulatory, policy, and clinical practice perspectives: Once these research goals have been met, how can the results help federal regulators and policy makers make nutrition policy decisions? What health economic and policy activities are taking place in other countries? How does economics affect the development of clinical guidelines?

Economic issues in U.S. healthcare delivery have gained increased prominence with President Obama's expressed desire to "raise health care's quality and lower its costs." A [detailed summary](#) of each of the three sessions of this workshop is available on the ODS Web site.

Also available at this link is the full agenda for the meeting and copies of the PowerPoint presentations of most of the workshop speakers.

New Funding Opportunities for Research

ODS collaborates on funding initiatives across NIH and with other agencies through mechanisms such as Requests for Applications (RFAs), Program Announcements (PAs), and notices. Over the past few months, ODS has signed onto several funding initiatives. [Further details](#) are available.

One opportunity of particular interest is an RFA from the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) titled *Mechanistic research on CAM natural products* that uses the R01 funding mechanism. Applicants are invited to investigate the active components of natural products, their molecular and cellular targets, and markers of potential beneficial or harmful biological effects. Research on the development of improved methods to isolate and characterize the constituents of natural products and on their determination in the natural food or product matrix will also be supported. NCCAM and ODS will contribute \$8.1 million to this funding opportunity. [Further details](#) are available.

Another opportunity concerns an RFA from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, co-sponsored by ODS and other NIH institutes, centers, and offices, using the R01 funding mechanism. Titled *Basic Mechanisms Influencing Behavioral Maintenance*, this funding opportunity by the NIH Basic Behavioral and Social Science Opportunity Network (OppNet) solicits applications to advance research on basic processes and mechanisms involved in sustaining learned health-related behaviors over time and in the context of dynamic environmental influences and changing psychological and biological states. Approximately \$3.75 million is available for this funding opportunity. [Further details](#) are available.

Additional funding opportunities through OppNet include *Development of Comprehensive and Conceptually-based Measures of Psychosocial Stress* (R21), *Psychosocial Stress and Behavior: Integration of Behavioral and Physiological Processes* (R01), and *Effects of the Social Environment on Health: Measurement, Methods and Mechanisms* (R01).

ODS Staff News

A poster submitted by **Leila G. Saldanha**, **Rebecca B. Costello**, and **Christopher T. Sempos** received a first-place research award from the 7th Annual Natural Supplements Research Competition. Titled *Quality of Reporting Dietary Supplement Research in Scientific Publications and Other Observations*, the poster was presented at the January 21-24, 2010 meeting, Natural Supplements: An Evidence-Based Update, hosted by the Scripps Center for Integrative Medicine in La Jolla, CA. Abstracts of all winning posters are published in the August issue of the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine.

Recent ODS Staff Publications

Regan L. Bailey, Margaret A. McDowell, Kevin W. Dodd, Jaime J. Gahche, **Johanna T. Dwyer**, and **Mary Frances Picciano**. Total folate and folic acid intakes from foods and dietary supplements of US children aged 1-13 y. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 92(2):353-358, August 2010.

Regan L. Bailey, James L. Mills, **Elizabeth A. Yetley**, Jaime J. Gahche, Christine M. Pfeiffer, **Johanna T. Dwyer**, Kevin W. Dodd, **Christopher T. Sempos**, **Joseph M. Betz**, and **Mary Frances Picciano**. Unmetabolized serum folic acid and its relation to folic acid intake from diet and supplements in a nationally representative sample of adults aged ≥ 60 y in the United States. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 92(2):383-389, August 2010.

Recent ODS Staff Presentations

Marguerite Klein gave a presentation, *Introduction to Soy Protein and Isoflavone Research*, at the National Advisory Council for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, September 3, in Rockville, MD.

Paul Coates gave the Opening Remarks, chaired the Regulatory Affairs Session, and was an International Collaborations Session panelist, at the 9th Meeting of the Consortium for the Globalization of Chinese Medicine, August 23, in Hong Kong. Dr. Coates also gave a talk, *How Research is Informing Public Health Policy Related to Vitamin D*, at the 2010 National Conference on Health Statistics, August 17, in Washington, DC. In addition, he presented, *Vitamin D: How Research Informs Public Health Policy*, at CDC Public Health Grand Rounds, August 19, in Atlanta, GA.

Jody Engel participated in a panel presentation on *New Technological Approaches for Reaching Consumers and Health Professionals*. She gave a presentation, *The Case for Change: Mobile Apps Expand the Universe for Consumer Health Information*, at the CDC National Conference on Health Communication, Marketing, and Media, August 19, in Atlanta, GA.

Leila Saldanha gave a talk, *Dietary Supplements Indexer: U.S. Adaptation*, at the Special Post-Conference Workshop: Dietary Supplement Description System, at the 34th National Nutrient Databank Conference, July 14, in Grand Forks, ND.

Paul Thomas gave a presentation, *Before You Swallow: Studying the Efficacy, Safety, and Quality of Dietary Supplements*, at the Florida Dietetic Association Annual Symposium, July 13, in Orlando, FL.

Upcoming Events (September – November 2010)

[National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Services \(NEAFCS\) Annual Session](#)

September 22-23: Portland, ME

ODS will have an exhibit booth at this conference.

AOAC Annual Meeting & Exposition

September 26-28: Orlando, FL

ODS will have an exhibit booth at this conference.

AARP National Event & Expo

September 26-October 2: Orlando: FL

ODS will have an exhibit booth at this conference.

51st Annual Meeting of the American College of Nutrition

October 7-9: New York , NY

ODS will have an exhibit booth at this conference.

Supply Side West

October 20-22: Las Vegas, NV

ODS will have an exhibit booth at this conference.

ADA Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo

November 6-9: Boston, MA

ODS will have an exhibit booth at this conference.

American Public Health Association 138th Annual Meeting and Expo

November 6-10: Denver, CO

ODS will have an exhibit booth at this conference.

ODS Update provides information on news, activities, and resources from the Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS). ODS is a program office within the Office of the Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The mission of ODS is to strengthen knowledge and understanding of dietary supplements by evaluating scientific information, stimulating and supporting research, disseminating research results, and educating the public to foster an enhanced quality of life and health for the U.S. population.

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