

# Conversations With a Nurse in Cancer Complementary and Alternative Medicine

**The following article is an interview with Patricia Davis, RN, BS,** a technical information specialist at the National Cancer Institute. Davis graduated from Johns Hopkins Hospital as an RN in 1960. In the early 1960s, she worked at Alexandria Hospital in Virginia as a pediatric nurse and was in charge of the recovery room. Later in the 1960s, Davis was a stay-at-home mother and volunteered for the Red Cross in Maryland. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Davis worked at Suburban Hospital in Bethesda, MD. She then returned to school and received a bachelor of science degree in behavioral science from the University of Maryland University College in 1981. After that accomplishment, she worked as a clinical research nurse and charge nurse from 1981–1991 on an adult oncology unit at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, then as a research oncology nurse, and then as supervisor of the oncology research nurses of the Medicine Branch of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), NIH. She currently is a technical information specialist for NCI, responsible for the complementary and alternative medicine information on [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov), NCI's Web site. Davis is a 20-year breast cancer survivor who was treated with an NCI breast cancer protocol.

## How did your oncology nursing career begin?

As I returned to nursing after being a stay-at-home mom, I was finally able to realize my dream of becoming an oncology nurse. I spent 10 years as a clinical oncology nurse at NIH and 10 years as an oncology research nurse for NCI at NIH. As an oncology nurse working with phase I and II trials, I shared in the excitement of any new drug that showed potential promise, but more importantly, I was privileged to work with the bravest and most dedicated patients.

## How did you arrive at your current position?

Eventually, I decided I was ready for a new challenge, but I knew that I still wanted to be involved in oncology. I was fortunate enough to hear about a position for a board manager for the NCI Physician Data Query® (PDQ) Complementary and

Alternative Medicine (CAM) Editorial Board. It would be very different from what I had been doing because I would have no patient contact and because the job would involve working with computer systems with which I was unfamiliar. However, it definitely was a new opportunity to use my oncology and nursing experience, and I always had possessed an interest in CAM.

## Can you describe the many facets of your role?

The PDQ CAM Editorial Board is one of six editorial boards and is comprised of independent experts who volunteer

their time. The CAM Board includes oncologists, CAM practitioners, natural products scientists, pharmacologists, U.S. Food and Drug Administration experts, a nutritionist, and an integrative care nurse practitioner. The CAM Board is unique in that it also has two patient advocates. The panel of independent experts is charged with reviewing current, evidence-based research findings and, based on the findings, authoring new and updating current PDQ cancer information summaries.

As the CAM Board manager, I am responsible for facilitating the work of the PDQ CAM Editorial Board and promoting its editorial efforts to the Web site [www](http://www)

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Patricia Davis, RN, BS, is a technical information specialist at the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, MD. Mention of specific products and opinions related to those products do not indicate or imply endorsement by the *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing* or the Oncology Nursing Society.

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