

# The complexity of applying evidence-based principles in implausible domains

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### National Capital Area Skeptics Public Lecture Series

FREE admission - Everyone welcome - members and non-members

For more information call the 24-hour NCAS Skeptic Line recording at (301) 587-3827

e-mail: [ncas@ncas.org](mailto:ncas@ncas.org)

[www.ncas.org](http://www.ncas.org)

Complementary and alternative medicine contains a number of claims that are highly implausible. Most of these claims are not based on scientific evidence and so can be largely dismissed from that perspective. Some, however, appear to have met the criteria for quality research required for acceptance in conventional medicine. How should this evidence be approached?

Should good data be dismissed if the plausibility is low and the purported mechanisms irrational? Do 'extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence,' that is, do we need to use more stringent standards for implausible claims than required in conventional medicine? If so, what requirements should there be? What type and how much evidence is adequate? Who should set those requirements? How can we determine when to invest in research at such a level?

Homeopathy and digital biology will be used as examples of implausible claims for discussion of these and other issues.

Saturday, February 9  
10:30am-noon

**Silver Spring Library**  
Colesville Road

**Silver Spring, Maryland**

about 4 blocks north of the Silver Spring Metro station

**Note:** Because of reconstruction at our usual meeting place, programs this season are scheduled at different locations and sometimes at different times than in the past. Please be careful that you check the correct location AND time for each meeting.



# Shadow of a Doubt

THE MONTHLY CALENDAR OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA SKEPTICS

FEBRUARY 2002

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## PENN AND TELLER ARE BACK

Penn and Teller are back in Baltimore at the Lyric Opera House from January 29 through February 3. For those who have still not seen them, says Baltimore's CitySearch "Don't expect rabbits popping out of hats. Think critters tossed into shredders or smashed by anvils, the juggling of broken liquor bottles and the losing of insects into the crowd. The duo's penchant for grotesque sight gags (including apparent self-mutilation) and inventive, off-the-wall creep-outs take the show beyond the realm of presto-chango into its own uncategorizable blend of morbid spectacle and performance art." Tickets via Ticketmaster or (410) 494-2712.

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## SCHOOL SCIENCE FAIRS

March is the month for local school districts to hold science fairs. If you have any experience judging science projects and would like to be a judge evaluating projects for appropriate critical thinking, contact NCAS (either email or phone). Science fair judges are expected to spend a Saturday morning reviewing projects and talking with the student participants. Usually only about a half dozen projects deal with topics of interest to NCAS, so the judging is not time-consuming.

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## SPEAKERS BUREAU

NCAS is starting to develop a speakers bureau. If you are a member of an organization that would like a speaker to talk on topics of interest to NCAS, or if you are an NCAS member who has the expertise to talk on such topics, let us know. We are developing a set of guidelines to create such a list of potential speakers.

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## IF YOUR PET NEEDS A PSYCHIC ...

On January 29th, the Animal Planet cable TV channel is airing a new show, "The Pet Psychic," hosted by Brit Sonya Fitzpatrick. Have your pet watch to learn his innermost thoughts.

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## WHAT IF YOU NEED A PSYCHIC?

In case you missed the January 6<sup>th</sup> *Washington Post*: "Over at the Cassadaga Spiritualist Psychic Therapy Center, five mediums are on duty, and walk-ins are welcome. Down the street and around the corner, the Rev. Margaret Ann Schmidt -- who describes herself as a spiritualist medium, counselor, healer and teacher, who also will guide by phone or e-mail or house party -- has a sign on her door that says, "Reading in Progress -- Please Come Back." Even in the best of times, this quaint central Florida village of 200 known as "Psychic City" gets a surge of visitors at the dawning of a new year. But now, in a world thrown into disarray since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, more people are seeking out this particular brand of guidance, hoping for clues to a future that is increasingly murky and frightening."

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## CSICOP INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

The following is preliminary information. You might find this worthwhile if you can be in LA in June. The Fourth International Skeptics Convention, sponsored by the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) is to be held at the Hilton, Burbank Airport and Convention Center, Burbank, California, June 20-23, 2002.

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## TIME TO RENEW?

Check your mailing label. If the renewal date has passed, please send \$30 (for 1 person) or \$40 (for 2-member households) for a one-year renewal to the NCAS address below, or you will be dropped as a member.

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