

## *Balchem Scholarship* supports nutrition student's choline research

In Dr. Steven Zeisel's lab, Amy Johnson is studying how certain enzyme mutations can affect the brain's ability to metabolize choline — a nutrient found in milk and eggs which plays a critical role in memory and brain function.

Johnson, a doctoral student in the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health's nutrition department, is the recipient of a new scholarship established by Balchem Corp. The scholarship will allow her to work with Zeisel over the next three years to study how choline is metabolized.

Zeisel, Kenan Distinguished University Professor of nutrition and pediatrics at UNC, is director of the Nutrition Research Institute (NRI), a new component of the School located on the North Carolina Research Campus being built in Kannapolis, N.C. He is internationally recognized for nutrition research, especially in establishing the body's need for choline.

"Dr. Zeisel is the leading authority in choline research, so we wanted to know how our group could help advance his work," says Paul Richardson, vice president of research and development at Balchem. "Our interest is to support continuing education on the benefits of choline."

Balchem manufactures choline chloride used by the food industry to fortify foods such as nutritional drinks, cereals, breads, yogurts, nutrient bars, frozen foods and supplements. Richardson said the company believes the School's research will provide important information about appropriate uses for choline by the food industry.

"The more that is known about choline, the more people will appreciate how important it is to include in their diet," Zeisel explains. "We are grateful that Balchem is supporting the work of a young scientist."

Johnson adds that she is grateful for the Balchem fellowship and excited about doing research that could translate into practical application and potentially improve the nutritional value of everyday foods. ■