

"Acu Detox Proves Helpful in Nepal Volunteer Clinics," (cover story) *Guidepoints: News from NADA*, May 2009, p1-10, 4p.

## **ACU DETOX PROVES HELPFUL IN NEPAL VOLUNTEER CLINICS**

Ryan Bemis, Staff Writer

NADA techniques came in handy for acupuncturists trying to cope with the complex needs of patients seeking care at field clinics in Nepal. The caregivers were in a group of recent acupuncture graduates visiting there last year whose patients were in distress from pain, pulmonary disorders and anxiety.

Andrew Schlabach, acupuncturist and president of the sponsoring Acupuncture Relief Project, has a long term vision for using acupuncture volunteers and training locals to improve access to health care in communities of need around the world. Their website explains: "Nepal remains one of the poorest countries in the world and has been plagued with political unrest and military conflict for the past decade. Our project will give our practitioners an opportunity to gain valuable field experience while making a positive impact on the local community."

During the first six weeks, the team of four provided 2442 acupuncture treatments for 806 patients within 116 days. Andrew says most clients suffered from chronic pain. The team had numerous Tan style protocols at hand, but language barriers made it difficult to reach a diagnosis. To begin with, he says, "Universal pain scales weren't so universal." In addition, there is no word for arm or leg in Newari, the indigenous language in Nepal. The entire limb, rather, is identified either as "hand" or "foot."

Acu detox proved helpful. "People would come in under a lot of distress, suffocating and wheezing. The 5NP was a place to start. It took the edge off things so we could do a better interview and treatment. It helps the patients be in their bodies so we could talk more specifically." He says he first saw this benefit as an intern at the famous Hooper detoxification center in Portland, Oregon. With the Hooper patients, he learned "I needed to use the 5NP just to have a conversation with them."

The team also reported success treating gastritis and asthma. Many clients were on a 12-18 month drug regimen for bone and skin tuberculosis from a local clinic. "The drug treatment is very damaging to the body. After 18 months they're very sick and yin deficient, with weak symptoms of every organ system of the body." The busy project clinic treated an average of 100 patients per day, and Andrew says acu detox was used for patients who were waiting to be seen.

The team's online travel blog describes several stories of their efforts to treat clients with neurological disorders and paralysis. Andrew says he learned that there are many cases where acupuncture can't help. Few resources existed for addictions and mental health treatment and support, and it was difficult to know how to respond to cases of domestic violence. "A lot of conditions started from a mental-spiritual realm more than from the body", for which acu detox was helpful.

None of the team members spoke Newari. They relied on interpreters, and trained them to be advocates for client needs. In the future, they may train them in acu detox. He says training locals in acu detox could help the sustainability of the project. "When looking at the service of health care practice internationally, it's a little complicated to serve where you are not part of a community. The energetics of exchange are not aligned because you're foreigners coming to help other people." The team envisions being able to start health projects, educate community members with acupuncture skills, and then move on to assist other communities in other parts of the world.

Group members learned about the monastery site by emailing former contacts from previous visits, but they didn't know where they would end up when they arrived. It turned out to be Campagoan, at Chokgyur Lingpa Foundation, a Buddhist monastery. A brand new building stood next to the monastery, with no vision for its use. It was perfect for their clinic.

"We saw people come from the community who never had health care in their whole life." The team didn't charge for treatments, but the monastery insisted upon charging 5 rupees, or 10 cents. "We realized this wisdom because it made everyone accountable for their care. Patients took treatment more seriously."

The team brought along granule herbs donated by Evergreen Herbs and Medical Supplies. Patients received free two-day prescriptions and were encouraged to return for acupuncture, with the reminder that "herbs don't work without acupuncture" to avoid those patients who were 'drug seeking.' In the future, the team hopes to use local herbs.

Acupuncture Relief Project was founded by Andrew and Leith Nippes. Leith's vision for the project came while trekking in Nepal six years ago. During his journey he provided first aid in a village he was visiting. Before long word spread that "there's a doctor in town." He learned that few people had access to medical care, and some had never seen a doctor before. When a woman brought her sick child to him, he realized he couldn't help. He says he decided to go to acupuncture school with the hope of returning someday. He is a board member of the project, and remained in Nepal with Garret Fabian for an additional 135 treatment days through April, 2009. Diane Wintzer is a fourth member of their team. They all met as fellow students at the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine. (Ed. Note: Probably the leading acupuncture school in the world in regard to support of NADA concepts and activities.)

Acupuncture Relief Project is a nonprofit organization incorporated in the state of Washington. Besides leading the project, Andrew serves as president and creative director of Split Diamond Media, Inc, a small graphic design firm.

Using recent acupuncture student graduates as volunteers will be an integral part of the ongoing work, according to Andrew. The project is currently recruiting four acupuncturists to staff two seven-week clinic camps in September 2009. The members of last year's volunteer team paid for their own travel costs. The project accepts donations.

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