

August 27, 2004

Hi Everyone,

The Mae On Project is going really well. From April 1 to May 27, 2004 Dr. Rungrat, a Traditional Chinese doctor, taught the first part of the course on the foundations of Chinese Medicine, the theory of diagnosis, and meridians and acupuncture points. From June 1 to August 11, 2004 I taught Chinese medicine therapeutics with a specialty in HIV/AIDS as well as Chinese medicine techniques including cupping, moxibustion, electrostimulation acupuncture and tui na (Chinese massage).



Here is Dr. Rungrat (centre) training Unchalee (left) and Jeed (right) in acupuncture.

The classroom teaching with the nurses went very well. It was of course, challenging in many ways including language and the fact we are dealing with an eastern medicine which has a totally different paradigm than western medicine. I think the solidification of learning will come when we see patients together. The nurses will understand what Qi deficiency is more clearly and what Yin deficiency is, etc.



Here are Jeed and Unchalee learning how to locate the more than 365 acupuncture points on the body.

All the nurses passed a written exam given by Dr. Rungrat as well as their case histories. We were all very pleased!!



Unchalee receiving her certificate for acupuncture.

Unchalee, the head nurse for the HIV/AIDS program at Mae On Hospital, Dr Nipporn, the director of the Mae On hospital, and I attended the International Conference on AIDS in Bangkok this July. It was a little overwhelming with the 15,000 attendees but we did enjoy it. Unchalee did an excellent presentation at a skills building workshop for the Oxfam project she is working on. We were all very proud of her!

We met with Dr. Heather Greenlee and Dr. Jessica Leonard, both naturopathic doctors who have acted as consultants for the Mae On Project research study. Thank you!! Dr. Greenlee is currently doing her PhD in Epidemiology and has volunteered to do the statistics for the Mae On Project. Dr. Leonard is a research fellow at Bastyr University. Both attended the International Conference on AIDS and had an opportunity to come and visit Chiang mai.

Mae On Hospital is about 1 hour outside of Chiang Mai in the countryside. To get to the hospital, we have to take 2 sawngthaews (trucks with benches in the back where the open cabs are) which only gets us to Sankamphaeng, a small town near Mae On Hospital. There is no direct local transportation to the hospital. Once in Sankamphaeng we meet with Unchalee and pick up food in the market for lunch. Its fun choosing from a large assortment of delicious curries, stir fried vegetables, and ginger chicken. So far we haven't gotten sick and have even tried raw vegetables!! Once we have our lunch it's about a 20 minute ride through the country side. And yes, her car has air con so we get a reprieve from the heat for a short while.

Some of you are probably wondering about the heat in Thailand. I think about it every day. The heat is very intense at the hospital, probably around 35 to 40 C. We are working in the physiotherapy room. We have one end of the room and physio the other end. We have fans but no air conditioning and I have to tell you it gets pretty hot in there. If I do any of the Tui na (Chinese massage), then I'm drenched. Unchalee was very polite and handed me a box of tissues while I was interviewing a patient. I know I was sweating profusely but was so engaged in the interview, I didn't wipe my face!! I can't imagine what I looked like but it must have not been very pretty!

We started seeing patients this week at Mae On Hospital and it was really good. We saw 10 patients per day on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. Those of you who do

acupuncture know that this is quite a load when you are first starting. Even more amazing is that the nurses are all working full time and are doing the acupuncture training on their days off. WOW! In fact, Jeed, one of the nurses, did a full day of acupuncture and then went to her afternoon/night shift right after. Unchalee, another nurse, goes straight from the hospital to a private clinic where she works from 5-9 pm! They are incredible! I on the other hand was so exhausted from the heat that I fell asleep by 9 pm.

Right now I am doing all the interviewing, diagnosis and choosing the acupuncture points and the nurses are doing the acupuncture. Once they get more efficient with the acupuncture, they will be doing the interviewing, diagnosis and treatment. The nurses are doing really well with the acupuncture despite the fact that they haven't had too much time to practice.



Unchalee at Mae On Hospital preparing for acupuncture.



At Mae On Hospital taking a patient's pulses for traditional Chinese medicine diagnosis.

Harry is doing most of the Tui na (Chinese massage) on the patients right now. Thank you!! As I said above when I do any of the Tui na, I perspire profusely, Harry even more so. However, he has it under control with a towel at hand. Harry also brings a change of clothes because after about the 5th patient, his shirt is basically soaked!! Eventually the nurses will be doing the Tui na massage.

All the patients are HIV positive and are from the local villages. The patients seemed to enjoy the treatments and are all very relaxed. Some of them fall asleep and even snore! I wonder if part of this is the fact that they all do hard labour and get very little time off. Many work as farmers and I imagine they are exhausted. However, when we ask them about energy, most patients have subjective energy scales better than mine!!

We've have been blessed with many friends here that have helped with the translation of all the research forms including Laurie Maund (Sangha Metta Project), Phra em (a Buddhist monk doing training in HIV/AIDS education), and Greg and Oi. A big thank you to all!!

I hope you enjoyed the update on the Mae On Project and if you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer them.

Thank you once again for your donations and making this project possible. We really appreciate it!!!

Take care and Khawp Khun Maak Kha!!

Laura



Interviewing a patient at Mae On Hospital.