

January 20, 2005

Hi Everyone!

Happy New Year! Here in Thailand it's been a tragic start to the New Year with the devastating tsunami. The tragedy has had a profound effect on everyone. One of our patients went to Kho Phi Phi Island to volunteer when he heard about the disaster. Just incredible!!

On a happier note, the Mae On Project is continuing to go extremely well. It's hard to believe that we only have 7 more weeks of clinical training!!

The nurses are amazing! They are doing the entire patient interviewing, diagnosis, choosing the acupuncture points and doing the treatment. I am most definitely out of a job now!!



Jeed (left) doing acupuncture treatment for back pain and Unchalee (right) doing ear acupuncture.



The patients are also continuing to improve and stay healthy. We had some very nice feedback from a Thai nurse doing her PhD on how to increase adherence with antiretroviral (ARV) drugs. She came to Mae On Hospital to interview the HIV patients on ARV. The nurse was very impressed by the excellent results the patients reported with acupuncture – more energy, better sleep, less pain, etc. In fact, she will now look at including acupuncture as an adjunctive therapy to decrease the side effects of ARVs in her thesis. Although we all see the wonderful affects of the acupuncture with the HIV patients weekly, it's always a bonus to get such positive feedback from an outside source.

We are also training two women, both affected by HIV and part of the HIV support group, as acupuncture assistants. They are learning Tui Na (Traditional Chinese massage) and assist with moxa, cupping, getting the patients set up for acupuncture, keeping track of supplies and clean up. They are both quick learners and have a lot of initiative as well as wonderful personalities. Luck has found us once again!!

Harry taught two classes on Tui Na Massage for staff and HIV positive patients at Mae On Hospital for their health promotion program. The training was a big success and we all finished extremely relaxed and with big smiles.



Here are several photos of Harry teaching Tui Na Massage to Staff at the Mae On Hospital for Health Promotion.

In preparation for finishing the acupuncture training, we are also setting up the clinic to make it more organized and efficient as well as creating a healing environment for the patients. We now have shelves for all the acupuncture needles and equipment as well as for the towels, pillows and books. Sarinee, one of our acupuncture assistants is sewing new sheets and pillow cases with very cheerful material from the market. And we have new soft and fluffy pillows for the patients!! No wonder so many of them fall asleep during acupuncture!!

One of the highlights since our last newsletter has been the New Year party at Mae On Hospital for the HIV positive patients, their families and the staff. The director of the hospital holds this party every year to help decrease the discrimination against HIV patients in their community and I can personally tell you that it has a positive effect on all. I was very impressed at the turn out (about 100 people) and all the extended family members who came. The Santa Foundation also attended. They fund an orphanage for children who lost their parents to AIDS. The children did dancing and singing performances and were just incredible! Each person who attended received a number for

the draw for many donated presents from department stores as well as nongovernmental organizations. Fun was had by all!



**Above left:** Unchalee and Santa Claus giving presents to the children after their dancing performance. I'm not sure why Santa was there since this was a New Year's Party, but everyone seemed to enjoy his company!!

**Above right:** The New Year's party was started with a Buddhist blessing given by the Traditional Thai Doctor Poi Ai.

We have had continuing visits from doctors in SE Asia to see the innovative and effective treatment programs for HIV patients offered at Mae On Hospital. We've also had two sets of 4<sup>th</sup> year medical students from Chiang Mai University observing the acupuncture clinic as part of their training. Now that's what I call a progressive medical school!



**Above left:** Unchalee explaining the acupuncture meridians to visiting doctors.

**Above right:** Group photo of visiting doctors from various SE Asian countries.



**Above left:** Unchalee showing 4<sup>th</sup> year medical students from Chiang Mai University the different acupuncture needles.



**Above Right:** Laura explaining to visiting doctors the benefits of acupuncture with HIV positive patients.

In addition, we've had both Bonnie and Cassie come and visit us. It's been so wonderful to have them come out to the hospital and help at the acupuncture clinic.



**Above:** Bonnie (left) and Cassie (right) doing moxa with HIV positive patients at the acupuncture clinic.

We all feel very blessed to be part of the Mae On Project and thank you once again for believing in our program and continuing to donate. As always we appreciate your support!

Wishing you much happiness, peace and of course, good health for the New Year!

With Abundant Health,

Laura

PS. Don't forget to check out the photos below!



This is a wonderful photo. Bonnie asked what she could bring for the nurses from Canada. I told her Jeed wanted a man....so Bonnie brought Jeed a Fireman Calendar!! The look on Jeed's face was priceless as she flipped through the photos! Unchalee got a Vancouver Calendar since she uses it as a date book. She couldn't very well pull out a calendar full of half-dressed men when discussing when to meet with Oxfam!!



Above: Jeed, Laura and Unchalee celebrating New Year's Eve together in Chiang Mai.