



January 5, 2007

Hi Everyone,

Happy New Year!! We're back in Thailand working on the Mae On Project. The HIV acupuncture clinic at Mae On Hospital is a continuing success and runs once a week. Four of the nurses trained in acupuncture are rotating through the clinic and applying their classroom skills. The patients are also doing well and continue to improve. Last week, we saw patients who have been coming for acupuncture regularly since the clinic opened in August 2004, in order to maintain their good health. It was wonderful to see that they understand the role acupuncture plays in preventative medicine. The acupuncture clinic at Mae On Hospital is the only one of its kind dedicated to the treatment of HIV infected individuals in Thailand.



Mae On Hospital located about 35 kms east of Chiang Mai, Thailand. It's a rural hospital that serves a population of approximately 20,000.

After what seems a huge amount of preparation, editing, translating, re-editing, emails, phone calls and face meetings, the second evaluation of the Mae On Project finally got under way on Monday 20th November 2006. We are doing a follow-up evaluation on the use of acupuncture as an adjunctive therapy for people living with HIV. For details of the results of our first study, please see our article published in the Fall 2006 edition of *HIV Nursing* on our website www.LauraLouieHopeFoundation.org under 'Publications'.

The second evaluation has a straightforward design: interviews, plus a quality of life questionnaire *before* acupuncture; 12 sessions of weekly acupuncture; and then more interviews and questionnaires. We're intentionally leaning towards a more qualitative design, because we feel it reflects the nature of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), and we're especially interested in exploring the 'lived experience' of HIV, and the role of acupuncture – as a specific intervention – in relieving symptoms associated with HIV infection and the side effects of anti-retroviral medication (ARV) as well as quality of life. This is why we're also adopting what, in the jargon of evaluations, is called a 'realistic approach': we expect to reveal rich insights into the impact of acupuncture on the lives of respondents, and what can enhance – or diminish – its effects.



Photo: Ian Hodgson (HIV Education & Research Specialist – left) and Laurie Maund (UN Certified Thai-English Interpreter - right) interviewing a patient at Mae On Hospital for the acupuncture research study.

We interviewed 27 HIV positive people during the two weeks of data collection, who all live within travelling distance of the Mae On Community Hospital. They're at various stages of illness and HIV experience, and are now receiving their course of acupuncture. They're a remarkably open and committed group, and even at this early stage of the study, we already have a remarkable insight into the difficulties, hopes, fears and aspirations forming part of their world. Perhaps like many of you, their main concerns focus on the care of their children and their desire to provide them with a good education.



Photo (from left to right): Ian, Laurie and Head Nurse, Unchalee Pultajuk after a day of patient interviews and many Thai sweets at the Mae On Hospital.

It's been a month since we started doing acupuncture on the 27 participants in the acupuncture study. The unusually cold weather has been a challenge. We've been using hot water bottles and lots of towels to keep the patients warm during their acupuncture treatments! I know my friends in Canada are probably all shaking their heads in disbelief. But check out the photos below. I'm not the only one wearing a toque!!



We've also been having some excellent results with the acupuncture. For example, many of the patients have numbness and tingling of their extremities from the side effects of the anti-retroviral therapies. One patient had numbness of both legs from the knees down to her feet for more than 3 years and rated the severity as 10/10 (10 being very severe). After only 3 acupuncture treatments, she has reported that the numbness is now only in her feet and rated the severity at 2/10. This has significantly improved her quality of life. Pretty amazing!!

Thanks to Dr. Nopporn Pathanapornpandh, Unchalee Pultajuk, Jennifer Westfall and Judy Kumar for their help in setting up the study, and to Lawrence Maund and Sumdee Chaipanich for their thorough translation of

the many forms. Also special thanks to Lawrence Maund for his tireless and engaging interpretation during the interviews and treatments. Thanks to Saharut Jetmanorom, also known as 'Tee', for his excellent interpretation at the acupuncture clinic and filling us in on all the Thai jokes!! A big and warm heartfelt thank you to Ian Hodgson for his invaluable help with the study design, for overseeing the interviews and all his support with the Phase Two acupuncture study. Thanks to Louise Nash for generously offering to transcribe some of the patient interviews and to Harry Bohm for providing all the wonderful photos. Finally, of course, thanks to the 27 people recruited into the study and all the staff at Mae On Hospital.

May the New Year bring you abundant happiness and of course, good health!

Thanks for your generous support!!

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For more information on this project and how to make a donation, please visit our website at www.LauraLouieHopeFoundation.org. For donations of more than \$50, you will receive a charitable tax receipt (Canadian residents only).

Your charitable donations will help to make a dramatic difference in the quality of life of many of these resource-poor people.

Thank you very much!



Photo: Unchalee (right) and Laura (left) at the Mae On Hospital Acupuncture Clinic dedicated specifically to treating people living with HIV.

Some photos of the Flower Festival in Chiang Mai

Unchalee, one of the first nurses to be trained in acupuncture, is now doing her Masters in Nursing as well as a special certificate course in HIV at Chiang Mai University. This means she is taking classes 7 days a week plus working at her own private clinic in Mae On District in the evenings. What an incredible and amazing person she is! Unchalee had 3 days off at New Years and wanted to take us to the beautiful flower festival in Chiang Mai. So here we are relaxing and having fun at the festival. Thanks Unchalee!!

