

Laura Louie Hope Foundation

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September 10, 2007

Hi Friends & Supporters,

We recently returned from another successful trip to Chiang Mai and we are happy to report that the Mae On Project, our acupuncture program for HIV and AIDS patients in northern Thailand, is thriving and continues to provide high-quality medical care.



Photo (left): Mae On Hospital is a rural community hospital in northern Thailand located 35 kms east of the city of Chiang Mai.

The acupuncture clinic at Mae On Hospital is sustainable meaning that it has been running weekly for 3 years and is now managed by Thai medical personnel. The Laura Louie Hope Foundation continues to support the clinic financially by providing acupuncture needles and other supplies including moxa sticks, Tiger Balm, gowns, towels, etc. We also provide advanced acupuncture training as needed and honorariums for two volunteer acupuncture assistants.



Photo (front row from left to right): Saharut (our interpreter), Sarinee (acupuncture assistant), Sarinee's daughter, Wandia (acupuncture assistant) and Tik (nurse trained in acupuncture) at Mae On Hospital. I'm the tall one in the back.

The acupuncture patients are doing well and their quality of life continues to improve. In fact, many patients have commented that acupuncture has considerably reduced their symptoms and has allowed them to work more hours thereby decreasing financial worries and significantly improving quality of life.



Photo (above): Kai (right), one of the nurses trained in acupuncture, and I doing pulse diagnosis with one of the patients at Mae On Hospital.



Photo (left): Unchalee, the head nurse of the HIV program doing acupuncture on a patient at Mae On Hospital.

We completed our second assessment of the effects of acupuncture on people living with HIV and AIDS this past March. Patients in our research study received 3 months of weekly acupuncture, participated in pre- and post-acupuncture interviews and completed quality of life questionnaires. We are still in the process of evaluating the data; however let me share a few quotes from some of our participants so you can get a sense of their impressions:

“I feel the improvement in my life is a result of both the anti-retrovirals and acupuncture. I’ve been taking the anti-retrovirals for about 3 years now...they work on my immune system to repress the spread of the virus...but I still had these symptoms. Whereas I had acupuncture for only 3 months, and all these symptoms have disappeared. With the strengthened immune system and the disappearance of the symptoms, my spirit is much better. I feel much happier and my life in general is better.” (Ms. R aged 42.)

“I feel that acupuncture has helped me because it’s boosted my energy. It’s also helped my symptoms” [i.e., pains in her hands, and lower arms] “and with increased energy, I’m able to work more and I feel in better spirits. When I’m working I feel that I’m just an ordinary person. I forget I’m HIV positive. I feel like anybody else.” (Ms. P aged 48)

Not only did acupuncture help alleviate patients’ symptoms, but the treatment regimen had its own far-reaching benefits on their morale:

“The acupuncture program at Mae On is very good. It provides treatment for us that is effective in treating our symptoms. And the atmosphere [at the acupuncture clinic] is very informal. When I come here, if I’ve got anything on my mind, I can speak openly with the doctors and the staff. They are very open in discussing things with me.” (Ms. J aged 38)

“I feel the acupuncture was most beneficial, but having the opportunity to meet my friends here and socialize with them, gave us the opportunity to sit and talk and discuss our problems. We could let out any stress we had. Most of us are stressed about our children, our families. And just being able to meet each other here and talk about this gave us the opportunity to let go of these problems. The acupuncture was more beneficial but socializing and having this opportunity to get rid of these problems also supported the acupuncture.” (Ms. Y aged 41)



Photo (left): Patients and volunteers having fun and socializing at the acupuncture clinic at Mae On Hospital.

This past April, I volunteered with the PanAfrican Acupuncture Project which trains health care professionals in acupuncture in Uganda. It was an invaluable experience for me to help with the training with these professionals and it was highly rewarding to see some of the same positive results from acupuncture treatment that we see in Thailand.

We also made a trip to Tanzania to visit Dr. Godfrey Swai who intends to launch an integrated medical clinic for people living with HIV. Unfortunately he is still struggling to raise the money needed to accomplish this worthwhile goal. We hope his clinic will be started in the near future at which time we plan to help train nurses in acupuncture techniques.



Photo (left): Dr. Godfrey Swai and I discussing plans for starting acupuncture training in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in May 2007.

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While in Tanzania, we had the great opportunity to meet with Dr. Yahya Ipuge, the country director of the Clinton Foundation. He offered to help us by meeting with the Tanzania Minister of Health in order to discuss the addition of acupuncture onto the list of recognized treatments for people living with HIV and AIDS. How exciting!!

So, what are the future plans of the Laura Louie Hope Foundation? This winter we plan to conduct a scouting trip to look at starting a similar program to the Mae On Project in another district of Thailand as well as in India. And once Dr. Swai's clinic is up and running in Tanzania, we will go there to train the nurses in acupuncture. We are also expanding the Mae On Project to provide educational scholarships for children in this district affected by HIV. In addition, we are hoping to develop future programs to include stigma and gender equality workshops, nutrition training, garden projects and income generation programs.

We would not be able to run the Mae On Project without the support and generosity of many people. Thanks again to **Dr. Nopporn Pathanapornpandh**, **Ms. Unchalee Pultajuk**, **Ms. Jennifer Westfall** and **Ms. Judy Kumar** for their help with the set-up and logistics of our study, and to **Ms. Sumdee Chaipanich** for her help with the evaluation of the consistency of the interviews. Also special thanks to **Mr. Lawrence Maund** for his caring, thorough and considerate interpretation during the patient interviews and treatments. Thanks to **Mr. Saharut Jetmanorom**, for his outstanding interpretation at the acupuncture clinic and for his thoughtful and kind-hearted persona which made everyone feel safe and comfortable. A heartfelt thank you to **Ian Hodgson, PhD** for his invaluable help in overseeing all the patient interviews and in evaluating their meaning! Thanks to **Pete Greasley, PhD** for his help in evaluating the quality of life questionnaire results. Many thanks to **Ms. Louise Nash** and **Ian Hodgson, PhD** for generously offering to transcribe the patient interviews and to **Mr. Harry Bohm** for providing all the wonderful photos of the Mae On Clinic and staff. Much gratitude to our many Vancouver-based volunteers for their help with our fund-raising events and especially **Dr. Sally Ringdahl, ND**, **Ms. Silvia Heinrich** and **Ms. Vickie Jensen** for kindly offering to edit our many documents. Special thanks go to the 27 patients recruited into the assessment study and all the staff at Mae On Hospital.

And last but not least, thank you for your generous support of the Laura Louie Hope Foundation and for making these successful programs possible!!

Laura

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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 resource-poor people.

Thank you very much!



Photo (left): Staff, volunteers and patients who have participated in the acupuncture clinic at Mae On Hospital.



Photo (left): Here I'm showing Tik, one of the nurses trained in acupuncture, a specific ear acupuncture point at Mae On Hospital.



Photo (above): I'm interviewing a patient for acupuncture treatment at Mae On Hospital with the help of Laurie Maund, a UN certified Thai-English Interpreter.