

# Laura Louie Hope Foundation

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March 15, 2008

Hello Friends & Supporters,

We recently returned from another successful trip to Chiang Mai, Thailand. We are happy to report that the Mae On Project has proven to be a vital resource in the care and support of people living with HIV and AIDS in that region.



**Photo:** Mae On Hospital located in rural northern Thailand - home of the Mae On Project.

The acupuncture clinic at Mae On Hospital has run weekly for almost four years now which indicates the longevity and sustainability of this project. Our guidance and support has meant that the three initial objectives of the project have been fulfilled:

- Five nurses have been trained in basic and advanced acupuncture,
- The Mae On Hospital has developed a free clinic to provide acupuncture for HIV/AIDS patients in the region, and
- Two evaluative studies have been completed in order to assess the efficacy of acupuncture on quality of life, the symptoms of chronic HIV infection and the side effects of anti-retroviral therapies.

Unchalee Pultajuk, the head HIV nurse at Mae On Hospital and our first trainee in acupuncture, oversees the clinic. Continued clinical support (two or three times per year for approximately six weeks in total) is provided by me and on-going support for the nurses, as necessary, is provided by Dr. Rungrat Pawaradhisian.



**Photo:** Head nurse Ms. Unchalee Pultajuk giving acupuncture to a patient. Unchalee is one of our first trainees in acupuncture and oversees the clinic at Mae On Hospital.

A second research study was completed in March 2007. The purpose was to investigate the benefits of acupuncture for people living with HIV, as described by the respondents. This study built upon our initial research, but employed a more robust design with pre- (phase 1) and post-acupuncture (phase 2) data collection using quantitative and qualitative methods.

Significant improvements were reported for most dimensions rated on the quality of life (QoL) scale, including: general health, energy, appetite, ability to work, sleep and mental stress levels.

Interviews of participants involved in the Mae On Clinic program identified four common themes:

1. **BENEFITS OF TREATMENT:** A majority of participants reported decreased severity of many of their HIV/AIDS related symptoms.

*“Since having acupuncture I’ve had a 90% improvement in my condition. I can do my work, and yesterday I spent the whole day standing and potting plants and digging in the nursery. I can sleep more comfortably and fall asleep and sleep through the night.” [17 - F - 34 - YD 1996]*

2. **SOCIAL NETWORKING:** Many respondents reported benefits from attending the clinic and socializing with other HIV positive persons. They commented that they would miss the opportunity of meeting with others at the clinic once the program ended.

*“When I come to the clinic, I have a chance to meet other people; not just people having acupuncture; they are also infected so they know the problems that people with HIV have to face, and I can sit and talk with them openly and honestly.” [15 - F - 37 - YoD 2003]*

3. **BECOMING ADVOCATES:** Participants described how they became ‘ambassadors’ for acupuncture; telling family and friends about its value and in some cases convincing them to attend the clinic as soon as possible.

*“I talked with family and friends about taking part in the programme: they supported my participation and asked if there was another programme for non-infected people who could also have acupuncture for problems they had.” [11 - F - 36 - YoD 2001]*

4. **WANTING TO CONTINUE TREATMENT:** A universal desire to continue acupuncture was reported in interviews with all the program participants.

*“I would like the acupuncture clinic at Mae On Hospital to continue - it helps others, and it does bring results.” [20 - F - 46 - YoD 1999]*

The findings from this second evaluation confirm those of the initial study: a cascade effect from acupuncture was reported on participants’ quality of life. Respondents perceived a decrease in the severity of physical symptoms, which in turn favourably impacted their work and home life on physical, emotional and spiritual levels. Many respondents also reported increased financial security because of their improved ability to work. A common perception related this to acupuncture treatments.

In addition, this evaluation provides evidence that the clinic serves as a **social hub** by bringing together large numbers of people living with HIV for a treatment modality set firmly within a holistic and person-centered paradigm. HIV stigma is a serious and ongoing challenge and this, compounded with the psychological impact of having a chronic disease, clearly has a significant impact on people living with HIV. We were encouraged that the positive impact of taking part in the clinic program was reported by so many respondents

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(around 90%), confirming that the social benefit of *attending* for acupuncture may be as important – from the patient’s perspective – as the acupuncture itself.

We were also encouraged by the willingness of many respondents to share with others the benefits of acupuncture, suggesting that the positive nature of the *experience* was such that they wished others to gain the benefits they clearly perceived for themselves.



**Photo:** Here I am seeing a patient with Unchalee (right) and Tee, our interpreter (left), at Mae On Hospital.

We are very proud of our accomplishments. The Mae On Project is sustainable and therefore it is our expectation that our involvement will be decreasing. The acupuncture clinic at Mae On Hospital has been running weekly since 2004 and has provided more than 800 treatments for people living with HIV in that northern region of Thailand. Although our project makes a small impact on worldwide numbers, it has made a very tangible difference in small communities of HIV patients and their families. The Laura Louie Hope Foundation will continue to support the acupuncture clinic financially by providing acupuncture needles and supplies including moxa, Tiger Balm, gowns and towels, as well as honorariums for two acupuncture assistants. We will also provide more advanced acupuncture training.

Our Tanzania project is still on hold while Dr. Godfrey Swai raises funds for his integrative medical clinic for people living with HIV.

Turning to other parts of the world affected by HIV and AIDS, the Laura Louie Hope Foundation is very excited to announce that we will be starting a project in north eastern India.



**Photo:** Darjeeling, India is the site of our next medical and educational project. It is located near the Himalayan Mountains and is very close to the border of Nepal, Tibet and Bhutan.. Here you can see Kangchendzonga (8598.), the third highest mountain in the world from the center of town.

On our scouting trip this winter, we were very fortunate to meet Father Abraham, a Jesuit priest from Canada who has been working with the poor for over 50 years. He introduced us to many groups who are working with people living with HIV in the Darjeeling area. This area of India is remote and HIV programs were only begun about 2 years ago, so there is a lot of work to be done. We plan to run both HIV/AIDS education and stigma & gender equality workshops in addition to our acupuncture training programs.



**Photo (left):** Father Abraham is one of the most incredible people I have ever met. He has given his life to working with the poor in this region. He was instrumental in introducing us to many local organizations. Thank you Father Abraham!!



**Photo (right):** Here I am giving Father Abraham acupuncture for gout with great success. It’s a wonderful way to introduce acupuncture to the local community.

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**Photo (left):** Here I am (far right) with Mr. Rajen Dewan to my left then Samapti (our guide and interpreter) and Brother Gabriel. Both Mr. Dewan and Brother Gabriel work for the Kripa Foundation which runs a rehabilitation centre for youths and includes an HIV/AIDS program in Darjeeling. We plan to provide training in acupuncture for their health care providers as well as workshops in stigma and HIV education. We have also networked with the Indian Red Cross Society in Kurseong, about 1 hour drive from Darjeeling, where we will also run an acupuncture training program for their rehabilitation centre.

We have our annual Laura Louie Hope Foundation Gala Event coming on May 22, 2008. Please see below for more details. We hope you can come!!

We would not be able to run these programs without the support of our dedicated volunteers. A big and warm thank you to Dr. Ian Hodgson, Dr. Sally Ringdahl, Ms Silvia Heinrich, Ms. Vickie Jensen and Mr. Laurie Maund. Special thanks to all the staff at Mae On Hospital, especially Ms. Unchalee Pultajuk and Dr. Nopporn Pathanapornpandh.

And of course, a heartfelt thank you for your generous support of the Laura Louie Hope Foundation and for making these 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](http://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**



**Photo (from left to right):** Here is Dr. Nopporn, the director of the Mae On Hospital; then Kai, Unchalee, Jeed (all three nurses trained in acupuncture); Sarinee and Wanida (both acupuncture assistants). I'm the tall one in the back!

**Upcoming Events**

*Laura Louie Hope Foundation Gala*

*Thursday, May 22, 2008*

*7 to 11 pm*

*At the residence of  
Ian Archibald and Glen Antonuk*

*Tickets: \$150*

*Gala Event will be held at an elegant private home in  
Shaughnessy. The evening will include delectable appetizers and  
buffet dinner with wine and beverages. Superb live music and  
silent auction.*

*For more information and to reserve your tickets please contact*

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*Please support these valuable projects*

*Thank you very much!!*

