

Laura Louie Hope Projects



November 19, 2011

Dear Friends & Supporters,

We can't believe it's been a year already! A year filled with challenges, excitement and success!

The Mae On Project continues to help people living with HIV and AIDS and the public in rural northern Thailand.

Our big news is that the building of the Complementary Medicine Annex at Mae On Hospital is finished thanks to your very generous donations. The annex houses the new acupuncture clinic which is a huge improvement. Previously the acupuncture clinic was literally right beside the toilets and had a very large step up to the treatment beds making it very difficult for those using wheelchairs or walkers. The new acupuncture clinic is well ventilated with four beds and has easy wheelchair access.



Photo (Above left): The lovely and talented Unchalee who is responsible for the incredible success of the acupuncture clinic and the Mae On Project. **THANK YOU Unchalee!**



Photo (Above right): The Complementary Medicine Annex which houses the acupuncture clinic as well as a multifunction room and offices.

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The new annex also has a multifunction room where the hospital holds seminars and courses for people living with HIV as well as meetings and the HIV medical clinic. The hospital also uses the space for special medical clinics such as the Hypertension (High Blood Pressure) Clinic and Diabetes Clinic.

With the new acupuncture clinic location also came new ideas to combine the HIV/AIDS and public acupuncture clinics together. Currently the acupuncture clinic is open to everyone for acupuncture. We are treating patients who are HIV positive next to those who are HIV negative, helping to further decrease any stigma or discrimination for those living with HIV and AIDS. We are thrilled!!



Photo (Above left): Multifunction room of the Complementary Medicine Annex. This room holds seminars and meetings for people living with HIV and AIDS as well as several special medical clinics including the HIV clinic, the Diabetes clinic and the Hypertension clinic. This room can also be used for yoga, tai chi, Qi gong and exercise classes.



Photo (Above right): Here is the acupuncture clinic at Mae On Hospital in it's first week in the new Complementary Medicine Annex. You can see we have way more space and an extra bed to treat patients. We are also overjoyed that it has wheelchair access and is not next to the toilets.

The Darjeeling project has been challenging. The acupuncture clinics for drug rehabilitation we helped set up with the Indian Red Cross Society have been closed. We were extremely disappointed to receive this news.

We were told from the Indian Red Cross managers that the staff had not been paid consistently over the last three years and because of this the staff were not motivated to work. In addition, in one clinic both staff members trained in acupuncture had relapsed leaving no trained staff to take over the acupuncture clinic. We had previously discussed this possibility with the Red Cross and asked for more trainees but were not provided with any.

We had a discussion with one of the managers of Indian Red Cross Society and they recommended that we put no more effort or money into trying to start the acupuncture clinics again. They felt the lack of organization and leadership in their society greatly hindered any prospect of starting the acupuncture clinics again. We were very disappointed in their commitment and have asked that they return all acupuncture equipment back to us so we can redistribute to our new training site in Kalimpong.

On a happier note we have started a new medical protocol acupuncture training in the town of Kalimpong (India) at the Adarsha Nursing Home this September. As you may recall, we were

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suppose to start the training program in February 2011. However, due to severe political unrest all the transportation in to and out of the area was completely shut down as well as all government offices, shops, banks, ATM machines, etc., for several weeks. Hence we decided to postpone the training to the fall.

Kalimpong is an edgy, rural small town in the hills of the Darjeeling district. It's in the northeast of India at the base of the Himalayas. Kalimpong is on the caravan trails from Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal and was the centre of trading for these areas. We just learned that it was only 15 years ago that you could actually spend some time here. Before that tourists were only allowed 2 day visits. Apparently it is a sensitive political military district.

The acupuncture training in Kalimpong is two-fold: One goal is to provide complementary treatment for pain since the only treatment in this rural, small town is medications which don't always work or carry significant or undesirable side effects. There is no physical therapy, massage, occupational therapy, chiropractic medicine, etc. The other is to provide these young women with a potential for income in the future. All the women we are training are poor and from small villages. When they get married they will move in with their husband's family and probably quit working as practical nurses at the hospital. By having a skill like acupuncture, they will provide a much needed way to treat pain in their village as well as receive some income to help with food and their children's education.

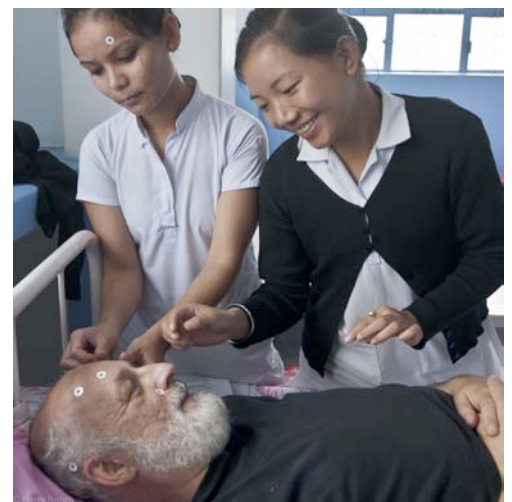


Photo (Above): Here I am with the trainees. From left to right – Sunita, Karuna, me, Ramit and Ashmita. You may have noticed that I have squatted down a little otherwise I would be at least a foot above everyone!!



Photo (Above right): Here we are in our 'classroom' learning about traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture. From left to right – Dr. Gylamit, Karuna, Sunita, Ashmita, Ramit. Dr. Gylamit is the medical director of the hospital and was instrumental in helping us set up the acupuncture training program at the Adarsha Nursing Home. Here she is listening in on our first day of the training.

Photo (right): Here Ashmita and Ramit are locating acupuncture points on Harry and themselves.



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In addition, the acupuncture clinic at the Adarsha Nursing Home will provide free acupuncture treatments for people living with HIV and have a sliding scale from the poor to middle class citizens of the area. In this way, we hope the acupuncture clinic will be able to sustain itself.



Photo (above): Here are Ramit (left) and Karuna (right) practicing how to insert an acupuncture needle on me.

Photo (above right): I love this photo. Here is Karuna in our hotel room at Holumba Haven practicing ear needling on Sunita. Look at that concentration. There is often no electricity in the afternoons and so we needed to use headlamps.



We just had our first clinic day seeing patients and all the nurses did really well. We were impressed with their needle technique and ability to locate all the back acupuncture points correctly. This is not an easy feat!! I've been doing all the history taking and choosing the acupuncture points while they are focused on doing the acupuncture itself. In this way they can get comfortable and confident, finding and needling the acupuncture points. In a couple of weeks they will start doing the patient interviews and learning how to do an acupuncture prescription. It's all very exciting – for them and us!!



Photo (left): Here is the acupuncture room set up for our first patients. You can see that there are two sets of beds divided by the middle table and chairs. One side is for women and one side is for men.

Photo (above): Here are Ramit (left) and Sunita (right) preparing to see their first acupuncture patients. Don't they look great in their nurses uniforms?

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Photo (above): Here are our first patients filling out forms in the hall of the hospital with the nurses before acupuncture treatment.



Photo (above): Here we are interviewing our first acupuncture patient with nurses listening on and our interpreter Bunty (far left). There are many languages spoken in this part of India. Nepali is the main language spoken in the Darjeeling district, but Hindi, Lepcha and other indigenous dialects are used. Thank goodness for Bunty!!



Photo (Above): Here is Karuna treating her first acupuncture patient.



Photo (Above middle right): Here are Ramit (left) and Ashmita (right). Ramit works night shift at the hospital and then attends college during the day! These young women are incredible!!



Photo (left): Here I am helping the nurses with acupuncture point location on our first day of treating patients.

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We wish you all a happy and healthy holiday season. Thank you for your continued support and for giving so many hope.

With much gratitude and appreciation,

Laura

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For more information on these projects and how to make a donation, please visit our website at www.LauraLouieHopeProjects.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.