



## The Phoenix Rises from the Ashes

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On September 11, 2001, suicide hijackers crashed airplanes into the Pentagon building in Washington, D.C. and The World Trade Center Twin Towers in New York City. These horrific acts have changed the city of New York, the nation, and the entire world. The aftermath of destruction, loss, pain, terror and unrelenting grief will be with us for a very long time. In the midst of all of these sad and painful emotions, it is heartening to witness the strength of the human spirit in its desire to heal and renew interest in life.

In New York, the destruction that followed the WTC attacks was immense. First in all minds was the loss of human life and the ripple effect on families and friends. Then came the realization that the economy of New York, and all that it affects, was deeply jeopardized. As a city, many of New York's daily functions were paralyzed. There was no driving of cars. Most public transportation was disrupted. People were walking on foot to get home. There were no airplanes flying overhead. Many businesses shut down, and there was an eerie quiet in the "city that never sleeps". A black smoke filled the skies, and an acrid smell permeated the air. A paradox that September day was that the sun was shining brilliantly, and the sky that could be seen was clear and blue. The two aspects of the sky represented the incredible destruction and the immense possibility for hope.

Within hours of the attacks on the World Trade Center, the professional communities of the city, state and nation were in rescue mode. Firefighters; state and local police; emergency workers, medical personnel; and members of the National Guard and Red Cross all converged on the city to try to save lives, put out fires, calm chaos and protect citizens. There was a desire on the part of all New Yorkers, and in fact all Americans, to help in the rescue and recovery effort. This was evidenced in the hours-long wait to donate blood that day (and for many days to follow). Everyone wanted to do something.

The New York acupuncture and Oriental medicine community wanted very much to lend its talents to the effort. The pathway for the fulfillment of that desire was the creation of the Professional Acupuncturists Response Team (PART).

Many thanks are due to Pacific College of Oriental Medicine. The students at Pacific's New York campus felt a strong urge to have the school participate in the support of search and rescue workers. The Pacific administration asked faculty members Sheila McLaughlin and Phyllis Shapiro, both Lacs, to begin the coordination of a treatment site. Sheila and Phyllis maneuvered their way into the confines of the Jacob K. Javits Center on West 37th Street, the base for FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Association), the National Guard and the state troopers. They were able to talk with the medical coordinator and begin a relationship with FEMA.

As a result of the discussions with FEMA, a 24-hour treatment site to provide acupuncture and massage was established. The recipients of the treatments were the search and rescue workers from what has been titled "Ground Zero," the site of the WTC destruction. All out-of-town rescue workers temporarily housed or assigned at the Javits Center were able to avail themselves of the treatments; this included FEMA personnel, state troopers, the National Guard, New York police and the inspiring search and rescue dogs (and their owners).



A rescue worker receives foot acupuncture.

On September 13th, the acupuncture community of New York began its part to help support the efforts of the incredibly courageous, brave, strong and amazingly humble rescue workers. The rescue workers were assigned 12 grueling, physically exhausting and emotionally draining hours of search, rescue and recovery work at ground zero. They would return to the Javits Center to eat, wash and sleep. Into this daily routine came the possibility for some much needed physical and emotional healing: the PART 24-hour acupuncture/massage treatment site. It was the privilege of the New York acupuncture community to offer treatment to these heroic men and women. The rescue workers were very grateful for our effort, but we were unspeakably grateful for their effort. It was a reciprocal relationship of appreciation.

The treatment site was a glass-enclosed room in the Javits Center that overlooked the FEMA command center and the barracks for the rescue workers. It took on a very special warm and heartfelt energy. It became a much-needed refuge for the weary workers and the dogs, and evolved into a place for the workers to go and release the many layers of pain and anguish in their bodies and hearts.

Many of the rescue workers had never had any bodywork treatment in their life, never mind acupuncture. The initial wave of patients was very wary of acupuncture and only wanted massage. The acupuncturists did their best to provide what was requested and needed. By the end of the first week, the word was out among the patients that "Hey, acupuncture works." We converted many a soul to the effectiveness of acupuncture and Oriental medicine. The services provided at the Javits Center included acupuncture and Chinese herbs (for humans only), massage and, in a separate effort, chiropractic. It was a great healing space.



Humans weren't the only ones to receive care from the PART team. Search and rescue dogs also received "TLC" at the Javits Center.

It was a special experience for the acupuncture community. It provided an opportunity for the entire community, from students to senior practitioners, to work in a clinical setting together. There were many different traditions of practice represented, and people who had never met had the chance to work side-by-side among the 12 treatment tables. Many practitioners generously donated time to cover the 24-hour shifts. Treatments were performed straight through the night and into the early hours of the morning, as well as throughout the day. There was such an outpouring of support that the project had to create a waiting list of volunteers. There were

approximately 300 volunteers at the Javits site. We had calls from across the country from individuals and institutions lending their support. We were not able to include all those who wished to volunteer since the response was so great in a very short amount of time. Thank you to all who participated, and to all who cared enough to try.

The PART project was highly successful due to the efforts of the licensed acupuncturists, licensed massage therapists, acupuncture students, Oriental medicine suppliers and the Steering Committee, a coalition of practitioners from Pacific College, Tri-State College of Acupuncture, the New York College for Wholistic Health, Education and Research, and the Acupuncture Society of New York (ASNY). The following list mentions only some of the people who were integral to the coordination of the project:

- Kathy Taromina, LAc, Oversight Coordinator (Pacific College, Chair of Clinical Practice)
- Laureen Gaston, Administrative Coordinator (Pacific College, student)
- John J. Del Giudice, LAc, Assistant Coordinator (ASNY Board Secretary, Tri-State faculty)
- G. Warner Seem, LAc, Assistant Coordinator (Tri-State College, Director of Marketing and Research)
- Marnae C. Ergil, LAc, Assistant Coordinator (New York College, Chair, Dept. of Oriental Medicine)
- Sheila McLaughlin, LAc, On Site Coordinator (Pacific College, faculty)
- Phyllis Shapiro, LAc, On Site Coordinator (Pacific College, faculty)



The suppliers to the acupuncture and Oriental medicine profession generously and eagerly supported the PART project. Without their support, these much-needed supplies would have been hard to come by. We thank:

- Aveda
- Dewes Research Corp.
- Golden Flower Chinese Herbs
- Golden Ratio
- Health Point Products
- Helio Products
- K'an Herbals
- Kamwo Herb & Tea Co.
- Lakon Herbals
- Lhasa Medical Supplies
- MayWay Products
- OakWorks
- OMS (Oriental Medical Supplies)
- Spanda Medical Co.
- Spring Wind Herbs
- TCM Supply Co.
- The Body Shop

Tri-State College and Pacific College also donated many supplies.

Thank you to the people who made the phone calls to organize the supplier donations:

- Michael Gaeta, LAc (ASNY Chair, New York College faculty)
- Sharon Czebotar, LAc (Tri-State, graduate)

The Javits Center project was completed on September 30th. There were approximately 1,300

treatments administered. PART is working to move its effort into another space in New York. The need for treatment continues as the city carries on its courageous attempt to clear the remains of the World Trade Center. Local rescue workers are continuing their efforts at ground zero, and numerous displaced and grieving individuals need support.

Aside from the PART project, many acupuncturists throughout New York have been providing pro bono treatment to individuals and their families affected by the disaster. In addition, many acupuncturists have gone into their neighborhood fire stations and police departments to offer treatment to the local heroes. During the first weeks of the disaster, Lincoln Hospital's auricular acupuncture program sponsored crisis intervention treatments at St. Vincent's Hospital for staff, firemen, EMS workers, police and families of the victims.

It is the hope of the PART Steering Committee that the efforts begun in New York can be passed on to other acupuncture professionals across the nation. PART has organized a system and created a protocol that could be implemented in any other emergency or disaster situation. PART has also created a positive working relationship with FEMA and other disaster relief organizations, and hopes that the treatment we provided will become part of the standard medical care offered to search and rescue workers wherever those brave and heroic people find their next call.

For further information on PART, please call Kathy Taromina at (917) 656-2240.

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