



**Deborah Williams, AP, performs  
acupuncture on Coast Guard**

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## **Sarasota Acupuncturists Assist Coast Guard Hurricane Responders**

Rachel Toomim, AP; Deborah Williams, AP

In the days and weeks following the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina, we have been successful in treating over 200 U.S. Coast Guard, FEMA, NOAA and Homeland Security personnel in Alexandria, La. The treatments took place in the Coast Guard's Integrated Support Command Center. The command center, located about 150 miles north of New Orleans, was a constant beehive of activity as the base for the massive recovery operation following the hurricane. The Alexandria location was chosen because most of the Coast Guard facilities were damaged or inaccessible due to the flooding in New Orleans.



## **Deborah Williams, AP, performs acupuncture on Coast Guard Incident Commander Capt. Frank Paskewich.**

It was an incredible and humbling experience for acupuncture physicians. We set up our clinic space in the Louisiana Convention Center, along with approximately 400 federal Hurricane Katrina operations and support personnel. These first responders were charged with the coordination of rescue operations, pollution response operations, and getting the port of New Orleans back on its feet.

We worked in cooperation with chaplains, crisis counselors, and the Coast Guard's allopathic medical personnel. Local massage therapists came into the command center several times during the week as well. Our efforts were extremely well received and appreciated. These dedicated and brave responders were under enormous stress from the complexity of operating in an environment with limited communications, inaccessible areas, and intense heat indexes. Most of them had also lost their homes and had their families scattered throughout the area. Yet through all of this, they performed superbly in all of their mission areas -- in fact, they rescued over 32,000 people. It was inspiring to see, and we felt obligated to give the best Oriental medical support we could.

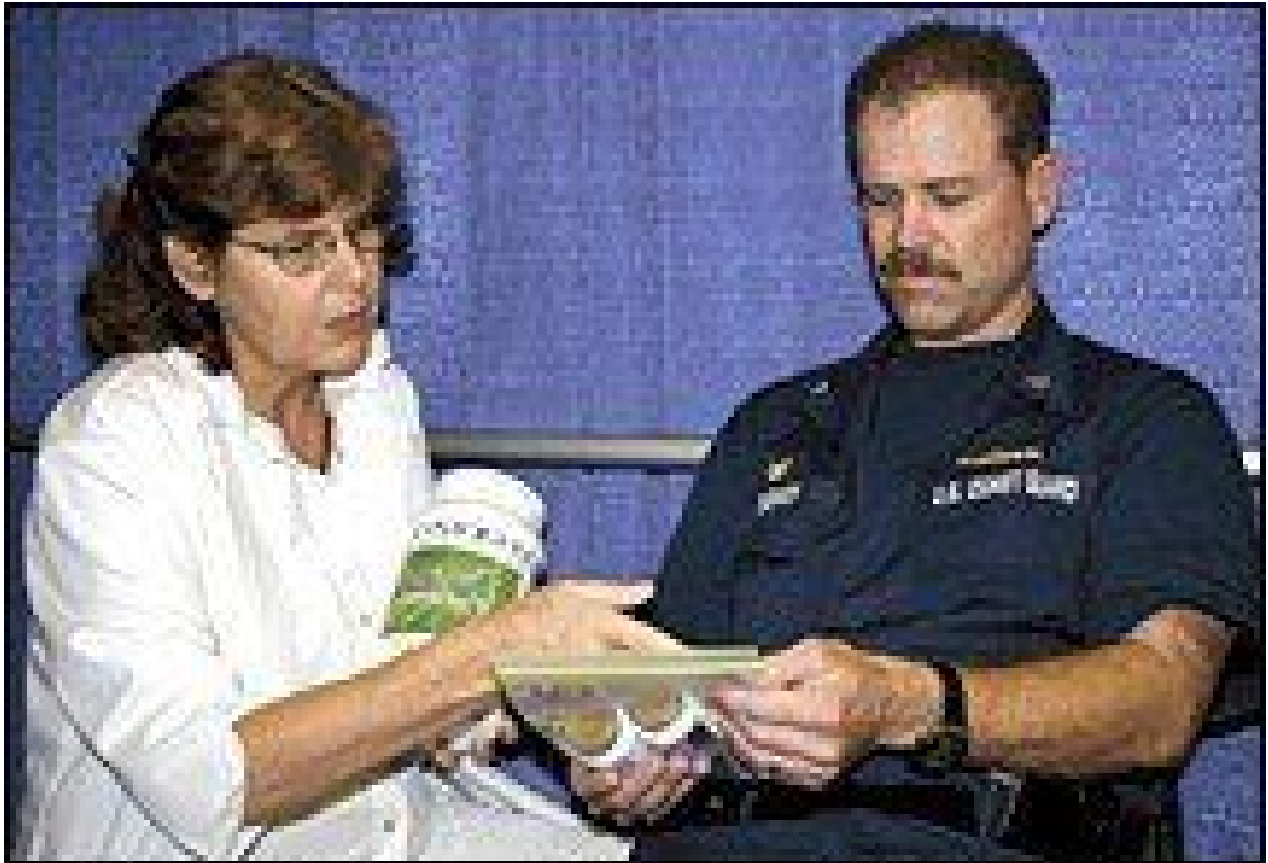


## Rachel Toomim, AP, performs acupuncture on a medical doctor with the Coast Guard.

We based our treatment on the NADA protocol of five points in each ear. Providing on-site acupuncture services to large groups under difficult situations is the hallmark for outreach provided by the National Acupuncture Detoxification Association. The command center didn't have the resources to set up a full clinic with many treatment tables or room for a large team of acupuncturists. It was gratifying to see the amazing results, especially given the limitations of our setting. Workspaces were cordoned areas with thin drapes delineating the U-shaped spaces. Ours was approximately six feet by eight feet, with eight or nine chairs lining the curtained walls and spilling into the space beyond.

Out of 200 treatments, we only opted to add a few body points for a couple of difficult cases. Although *baihui* (Du 20) was a popular addition to the treatment, we were generally able to treat whatever was presented with ear points. This kept the treatment process simple and worked with our limited treatment area. The herbs and supplements we passed out were generally "first aid" and "well-being" supplements to support the relief responders through long hours of mentally and physically draining work. We were so fortunate that Xymogen, Inc. and Golden Flower Chinese Herbs donated their products to the relief effort and arranged to have them shipped ahead to the command center so that they were there when we arrived. We prescribed protein powder, vitamins, snack bars, and probiotics (friendly bacteria for their guts) from Xymogen, and *gan mao ling*, astragalus & ligustrum, and viola clear fire (when it was needed) from Golden Flower. Blue Poppy has arranged to send two products (ColdQuell and Allerease) for distribution by the next round of acupuncturists. Having herbs, supplements and nutritional products available for

distribution greatly enhanced our treatments and the benefits to these stressed responders.



## **Deborah Williams advises Capt. Paskewich on herbal remedies while receiving acupuncture.**

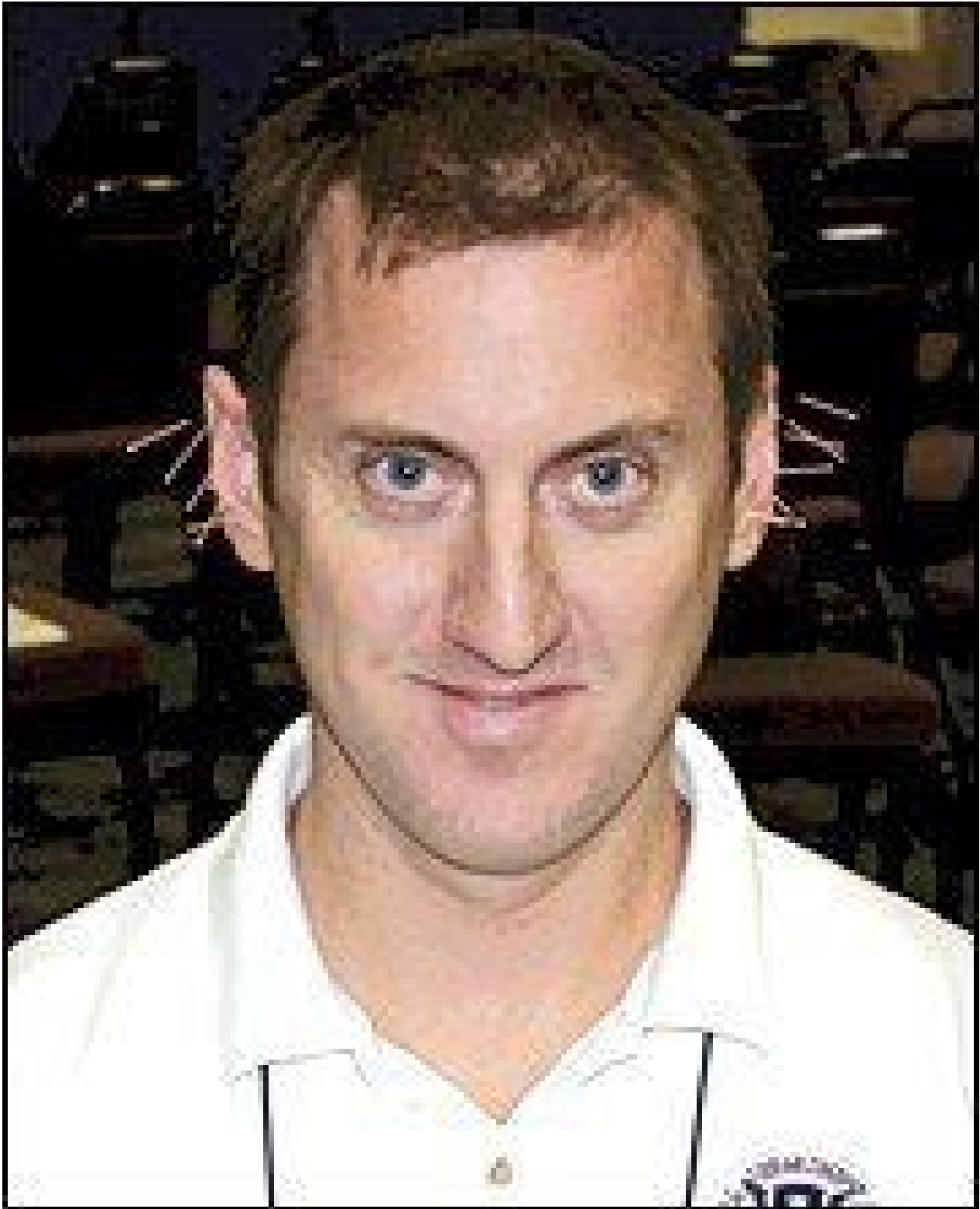
Most of the relief workers had never experienced acupuncture. We were surprised that so many of them were so open-minded and willing to try something new. The majority of the counseling and medical staff took the treatment as well. Coast Guard Incident Commander Capt. Frank Paskewich noted that there were no negative responses. All reports were favorable. This is truly a historic event for an organization such as the Coast Guard. We hope that our work and the work of the acupuncturists who follow us will create a new conversation about the kind of support that benefits our emergency responders.

Because the NADA protocol allows for nonverbal access to treatment, we didn't really get to hear too many stories from the disaster responders. However, the results from the treatments were obvious. One young man returned from working in New Orleans with severe acute stress disorder. When he first sat down to receive the treatment, he was trying to read the newspaper. His legs were bouncing up and down nervously as he sat, toes tapping, while he shuffled the pages. Because of his obviously fragile state, it was decided to abbreviate the usual 10-point ear treatment. He was given the ear points Shenmen and Kidney bilaterally, with the addition of *baihui*. After about 10 minutes, his knees stopped bouncing. He looked calmly at Rachel and said, "You remind me of a friend in Seattle." His voice was calm, and we spoke for a while of anything but trauma. The beauty of the acupuncture treatment is that it was not necessary for him to recant his horrifying experiences in New Orleans in order for us to help him.

Comments from the treatment recipients echoed those who received acupuncture after the 9/11 terrorist incidents. Recipient surveys from those who received this acupuncture protocol showed

the following:

- reduction of anxiety and depression
- improved ability to cope
- improved ability to sleep
- increased mental clarity
- improved alertness
- reduction of aches, pains and muscle spasms
- relief from intrusive recall of traumatic events



**An officer with the Department of  
Homeland Security after receiving  
ear acupuncture.**

The logistics of getting to Louisiana from Sarasota, Fla. were quite a challenge. Spotty

communications with key people on location; arranging for supplies to be sent ahead on scene; getting permission to conduct our treatments; locating a place to stay; and determining a safe way to travel there, all had to be addressed. East West College of Natural Medicine, its alumni association, and many family and friends, provided outstanding financial and moral support to us for this mission. Donations from the acupuncture community and from an initiative by Citizens for Health ([www.citizens.org](http://www.citizens.org)) came in through the AOM Alliance.

A word to our colleagues: The more planning that can be accomplished before deploying, the more successful your mission will be. Also, your support team must be self-sufficient and well-supplied. You must expect minimal help from the on-scene personnel because they are so caught up in their own responsibilities. That being said, all in all, our mission must have been divinely led, because we overcame each of these obstacles and things really went incredibly smoothly. It made us so proud to be acupuncture physicians and know that we contributed in a small way to something that is historical.

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#### Comments From Coast Guard Hurricane Responders

"I suffer from acute stress disorder and after one treatment I felt so at ease and relaxed."

"Acupuncture is something I would recommend to anyone." - MST3 Mullin

"My back and right leg and neck pain were reduced by 95 percent. The numbness that was going down my right arm is gone." - D. Thiel, PAC (ISC Medical)

"After 12 hours when I return to the hotel, I am normally exhausted. (I) noticed after treatment that was not the case."

"The treatment really relaxed my body and mind, and when it was complete, I felt more at ease. My stress was relieved and I felt good." - HS2 Michael McClantoc

"The treatment was truly great. It helped me relax instantly, as if all the tension and pressure from my body left my body little by little. Thanks for your time and assistance." - V/R Lt. Cmdr. Hector

"Recommend the point of a hundred meetings. (It's a) great stress reliever and always good to take some time out of the day to relax. This is the perfect supplement." - YN2 Schaffer

"Let yourself relax for 30 minutes! Enjoy the experience, drink astragalus, and forget about your worries ... believe in this preventative measure." - GS

"Very relaxing and calming. In fact, I'm so relaxed I can hardly hold this pen and write." - MK2

"Very relaxing. Would recommend to everyone. Puts you in a place that you don't want to leave, pure calmness."

"First time, will come back, anxious to see how long it will last. Thanks."

"This experience has truly been a remarkable one! I definitely felt a change in the upper portion of my body. Recommend it to others. Thank you."

"At first, I was scared to get needles in my ears, but then I felt much more relaxed after."

"I would recommend the de-stressing treatment to anyone under these stressful circumstances, all would benefit."

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