

Calamity Is the Touchstone of Man

Angela C. Liu, MD (China), OMD, MSS, Dipl. Ac. (NCCAOM)

A week after the deadly Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, I worked as a volunteer, providing survivors medical assistance in a shelter located in the Daphne-Mobile area of Alabama. The hurricane victims came from all areas of the Gulf Coast, including Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. They were transferred by military trucks to the shelter. New shelters in Baldwin County, Alabama are now being up, ready to open themselves to the victims of the hurricane.

The shelter was strictly secured by police and Coast Guard personnel. Everyone had to pass through an electric screening area before being allowed to enter the shelter. Many beds were set up in a huge dance hall in a nearby civic center. Temporary showers were built outside the building, with hot and cold running water. Volunteers worked in all areas of the shelter, from the entrance to the kitchen, and from the medical office to all of the halls. Everything came from donations: canned food, fresh fruit, milk, bottled water, baby diapers, and lots of toys. In the medical office, medical supply companies contributed all types of medication and supplies - even paper and pens.

The volunteers showed great hospitality and compassion. They walked to each table where the hurricane survivors ate and would ask, "Do you need some more water or drinks?" They were indeed the best waiters and waitresses I have ever seen. If you talk to the hurricane victims, they always cry. Some even said that they didn't remember anything. But the volunteers warmed their hearts. Some volunteer social workers talked to some of the people and tried to cure their emotional ills. Many survivors found some kind of work to do, which was organized by local authorities. They went out to work in the city during the day. Since they had lost everything, free public transportation was provided to them.

The shelter's medical director, Dr. Mitchell, who was one of my graduate schoolmates, was also one of my first patients. I also treated the director of the shelter. Since so many people wanted to get acupuncture treatments, I soon ran out of acupuncture needles. Fortunately, under arrangements made by the AAOM, Bill Mortimer, the marketing manager of Lhasa OMS, quickly sent a large package of needles as a donation.

I have been a member of the AAOM since 1995. In the past 10 years, I have brought in many physicians to the AAOM's annual conference. Now in the course of recovering from Hurricane Katrina, I believe the AAOM did a fantastic job in helping with the survivors. The Chinese have a saying: "Calamity is the touchstone of man." As the representative of the Alabama Association of Oriental Medicine, we greatly appreciate the AAOM, Bill Mortimer, and the many other individuals, corporations and organizations for their generous contributions.

Hurricane Katrina also affected my house and business, which has made things difficult for me, both in business and in regular life. Another member of the association, Dr. Henderson, had his house in Grand Bay (just across from my home in Mobile Bay) destroyed by the hurricane. We still need all

kinds of acupuncture and Chinese medical supplies. If you make a contribution, please send it to the following address. Any help will be greatly appreciated.

Alabama Association of Oriental Medicine
28311 North Main Street, Suite B-101
Hidden Creek Professional Park
Daphne, AL 36526-7061
Tel/Fax: (251) 626-5066

NOVEMBER 2005