



GENERAL ACUPUNCTURE

PCOM Staff, Faculty and Alumni Give Back to Veterans

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The heart of a healer is filled with compassion and the desire to serve. The heart of a warrior is filled with honor and the desire to serve. These two worlds come together at PCOM. Some of our current students, alumni, and staff are veterans themselves. Giving back to the community is not just about being of service, it is about answering a calling.

Recently, I had the pleasure of supervising interns and treating patients at the Veterans Stand Down, which occurred on Friday, July 12, in San Diego. We were staffed with four licensed acupuncturists and four student interns from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and from 8 a.m.-1p.m. on Sunday. We treated 95 patients, just on Friday, with acupuncture, and many more with massage. There were between 10-12 massage therapists working at any one time adjacent to the acupuncture area. Remarkably, all but a few patients were helped with a very simple modified Balance Method protocol that we employed for the acupuncture treatments, and everyone I observed who got off a massage table, or the Lomi Lomi mat, had smiles on their faces.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the Veterans Stand Down, it is an extraordinary event that extends an array of services to veterans at no cost. The first Stand Down was organized in San Diego in 1998 by Veterans Village of San Diego. It has grown out of this first event to include nationwide Stand Downs numbering more than 200. The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans states: "The program has become recognized as the most valuable outreach tool to help homeless veterans in the nation today."



Stand Down's philosophy is a hand up, not a hand out. The hand up is made possible each year by the dedication of thousands of volunteers and numerous sponsors.

Our group was set up in a large M.A.S.H. style tent over an asphalt surface on the grounds of San Diego High School. We were one of many tents that offered services ranging from food service, clothing, medical, showers, grooming, employment services, AA, NA and others - all free of charge of course.

What really stood out for me was how well the simple treatment strategy of treating contra-lateral sides from the affected area worked and in a very short time. Needles were retained for no more than 20 minutes typically and most people had significant pain relief, even from extremely chronic pain. Some of the patients that I treated had gait altering back pain, neck pain head ache, migraine, shoulder pain, elbow pain, foot and ankle pain, peripheral neuropathy, generalized fibromyalgia, and post traumatic gun- shot wound pain. All of these patients received pain relief and reduction if not complete abatement of neuropathies.

The protocol was a modification from Richard Tan's Balance Method as adapted by my colleague, PCOM Alumnus and Veterans Village Acupuncture Integrative Medicine Director, Mitch Lehman. All patients were treated while sitting in folding chairs that were set-up in a circular formation at the rear of the tent.

The conversations that I had with the veterans whose ages ranged approximately from mid-20s to late 70s were fascinating and humbling. At first, I was apprehensive of who would be entering our area, however, by about 8:45 a.m. on Friday after I had treated my first patient and my students had also

treated theirs, I was confident and inspired for the remainder of the day. What followed did not disappoint, as more and more patients filtered in with representation from all colors, sizes and varying levels of vitality and overall states of health.

At the end of the day, I felt tired, and had the feeling of a purpose fulfilled, yet still wanting more. When I arrived home to greet my wife and family I gave them all a hug and a kiss and thanked the universe for the good fortunes that I have been graced to receive, including the gift that in some small way I was able to be of service on that day to those men and women that have served our country. I'm looking forward to next year's Stand Down event.

For more information about the Veterans Stand Down please visit: www.vvsvd.net/standdown.htm

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