

9/11's Emotional Effects Linger

September 11, 2001, left a deep impression on everyone who experienced it. The sights and smells of the World Trade Center that day will never be forgotten. The workers and volunteers who dealt with its aftermath for weeks and months will certainly never forget what they experienced.

A place for help

The impact 9/11 had on some responders' physical health is very clear. But in addition to medical problems, many responders also suffer the emotional effects of the WTC disaster. The World Trade Center Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program tries to improve the psychological health of 9/11 responders, in addition to treating their medical problems.

All the clinic locations in the program offer mental health screening and treatment. In the last few years, the program has helped thousands of 9/11 responders cope with the emotional effects of their WTC work. Although every patient's experience is unique, responders share some common woes. Depression, anxiety, and

substance abuse are conditions experienced by many 9/11 responders who have come for treatment.

A loss of joy and pleasure in life, less hope about the future, having a hard time sleeping and concentrating—these are all symptoms that affect sufferers of major depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Those two conditions affect many 9/11 responders, and they can lead to difficulties in personal relationships and problems at work.

With the help of a mental health professional, 9/11 responders can feel better.

"We have great confidence in our treatment if the patient is willing to work with us," said Dr. Craig Katz. He is the supervising psychiatrist at the WTC Mental Health Monitoring and Treatment Program at Mount Sinai's Clinical Center. "We're fortunate to be able to offer many kinds of treatment for the mental health problems people have, which are often chronic."

Treatments include medication, psychotherapy—individual, group, and family. There's also wellness



therapy, which teaches patients to manage the physical sensations of PTSD and depression through relaxation and visualization. These sensations can include a pounding heart, sweating, and shortness of breath. The specific treatment a responder receives will depend on his or her individual situation.

Get relief

Social worker Janet Lavelle, LCSW, urges responders to see their mental health in the same light as their physical health.

"They should think of these symptoms as any other medical consequence of being a 9/11 responder," Ms. Lavelle said. She

supervises the social work staff at the program's two Long Island Clinical Center locations.

But no matter what kind of treatment a patient gets, it is always beneficial to start as soon as possible. In mental health, just like in physical health, it is easier to treat a problem when you catch it early. The doctors, social workers and psychologists who work for the WTC program encourage all responders who think they need help to seek it.

"People suffer silently too much when it comes to mental health problems, and they don't have to," said Dr. Katz.

Ask the Doctor – Dr. Fatih Ozbay Attending Psychiatrist at the World Trade Center Mental Health Treatment Program and Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

—See page 3

High Blood Pressure Relieved by the 9/11 Neediest Medical Campaign

WHEN MAURICE SILVERSTEIN went to the emergency room with chest pains about a year ago, he got good news and bad news. The good news was he was not suffering a heart attack. The bad—his blood pressure was so high, doctors worried it would threaten his life.



Maurice Silverstein

“They told me it was astronomical,” said Mr. Silverstein, who was an American Red Cross volunteer on Ground Zero on September 11, 2001.

He ended up staying overnight at the Mount Sinai Medical Center, where cardiologists monitored him. The next day, the 48-year-old former paralegal was sent home with blood pressure medicine and instructions to come back for follow-up visits with his doctors.

Mr. Silverstein was able to control his hypertension with three medications and regular check-ups with his cardiologist. And his health care was covered by state-subsidized insurance. Unfortunately, after several months, he lost his insurance. He started receiving weekly benefits from volunteer Workers’ Compensation. It gave him about \$400 a week, and this meant his income was too high for the state insurance program.

His blood pressure treatment now in danger, Mr. Silverstein found other ways to get the medicine he needed. He would buy the hypertension drugs he had been taking in pharmacies in the Dominican Republic, where he regularly visits. There, he did not need a prescription, and the prices were far lower than what he would have paid in New York City without insurance.

“I had to figure out a creative solution while I was thinking of the next step,” he said.

Mr. Silverstein applied for another type of state-sponsored health insurance, but was rejected. He knew his situation could not stay the same for long, but aside from re-applying for the state program, he did not know what to do—until he met an outreach worker from the WTC Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program.

Reggie Pabon, an outreach coordinator at the Mount Sinai clinical center, advised Mr. Silverstein to apply for the 9/11 Neediest Medical Campaign for coverage of his high blood pressure. Mr. Silverstein then made an appointment with Forster Chhean, a benefits counselor at the clinic. And Mr. Chhean helped him apply for the fund.

“It was a simple process. He asked me some questions, asked my doctors some questions, and that was it,” Mr. Silverstein said, describing his appointment with the benefits counselor.

For the past two months, Mr. Silverstein has been able to see his cardiologist and get his medicine right here in New York City.

“For the time being, it’s addressing the major problem,” he said. “It has given me the ability to be treated and seen.”

The 9/11 Neediest Medical Campaign is funded by The New York Times Neediest Cases Fund and other generous donors

WTC MEDICAL MONITORING & TREATMENT PROGRAM PARTICIPATING CLINICAL CENTERS

For more information, to register, or to change clinical locations, call 888-702-0630

MANHATTAN

- Mount Sinai-I. J. Selikoff Center for Occupational & Environmental Medicine 212-241-1554
- Bellevue Hospital Center/NYU Occupational & Environmental Medicine Clinic 212-562-4572

QUEENS

- The World Trade Center Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program, Queens Clinical Center. 718-670-4174

LONG ISLAND (SUFFOLK AND NASSAU COUNTIES)

- Long Island WTC Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program, SUNY Stony Brook 631-444-6436

NEW JERSEY (PISCATAWAY)

- UMDNJ Environmental & Occupational Health Sciences Institute. 732-445-0123 x600

OUTSIDE THE NEW YORK METROPOLITAN AREA

- Appointments are available in locations across the country Call 888-702-0630 for details

NYC FIRE DEPARTMENT: Bureau Health Services

- For current FDNY firefighters and officers and EMS workers 718-999-1858
- Firefighters, officers and EMS retirees can get services at the FDNY (718-999-1858) or at any of the clinical centers listed above. 888-702-0630

9/11 NEEDIEST MEDICAL CAMPAIGN IS AVAILABLE TO PARTICIPANTS OF THE WTC MEDICAL MONITORING AND TREATMENT PROGRAM

You may apply for this fund if:

- you have been diagnosed with a life-threatening illness;
- the illness is not related to your WTC exposure; and
- you have no health insurance at all.

If your application is approved, the fund would pay for some medical expenses related to your life-threatening illness.

This is available to ALL participants in the World Trade Center Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program.

If you think you are eligible, please contact your WTC Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program clinic, or call 212-241-6307.

Ask the Doctor—Dr. Fatih Ozbay On Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Dr. Fatih Ozbay is Attending Psychiatrist at the World Trade Center Mental Health Treatment Program and Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine

Q: What is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?

A: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD, is an anxiety disorder that some people develop after they experience highly traumatic events. The events either threatened their lives or seriously endangered their physical safety, and they were deeply frightened or horrified by the event. Typical examples include car accidents and fires.

After something traumatic happens, people will normally experience anxiety, nightmares, or unwanted thoughts about the event. However, if the anxiety and other problems don't go away after awhile, and they affect your personal relationships, your social life, or your ability to do your job, it may mean that you have PTSD.

Q: What are the symptoms of PTSD?

A: Nightmares about the event, uncontrollable thoughts and feelings about the event that come over you suddenly, trouble sleeping, and flashbacks are major PTSD symptoms. A nearly constant sense of watchfulness is another one. For example, when a PTSD sufferer goes into a restaurant, he may need to find a seat with his back facing the wall, so that he can see everything that's going on around him. People with PTSD can also isolate themselves—from people, places, and situations

that might remind them of the traumatic event. They often have strict daily routines so that they don't come upon any surprises in the course of the day.

Q: What should you do if you experience symptoms?

You should contact your WTC Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program clinic, if you believe your symptoms are 9/11-related. I don't recommend anyone to try to get better on your own. PTSD requires specialized assessments and treatment.

Sometimes people assume they have to get their family member or friend to talk about the traumatic experience, that they just need to get this thing off their chest and they'll be just fine. That's just plain wrong.

Q: How can people with PTSD feel better?

The most effective treatment seems to be based on psychotherapy or "talk therapy" as it's often called. There are specific treatments developed to treat PTSD such as exposure therapy and cognitive processing therapy. At the WTC Mental Health Treatment Program at Mount Sinai, we do supportive and cognitive psychotherapy. It is flexible and tailored to patients'

needs. It can address what is happening in the patient's life right now, and what we can do to improve that.

Medications such as antidepressants are also used to treat PTSD. There are two antidepressants that are government-approved to treat this condition. And there are other drugs that can be used to treat specific symptoms.

Psychotherapy and medication are sometimes used together, sometimes one after the other. It all depends on the patient's needs and situation.

Q: What should you do if you think that you or someone you care about has PTSD?

Sometimes people assume they have to get their family member or friend to talk about the traumatic experience, that they just need to get this thing off their chest and they'll be just fine. That's just plain wrong. You shouldn't force someone to talk about extremely traumatic events. Friends and family members should be willing to listen, and be encouraging and supportive, however, they shouldn't push 9/11 responders to talk before they are ready.

It's a very sensitive issue. Most people are afraid of the continuing stigma linked with mental illness. However, there are sensitive ways to share their concerns and worries. They can share information they come across about PTSD with the patient. They can gently suggest or ask the patient whether they want to get help, but refrain from demanding something he or she is not ready for.

“Whatever happens—I’ll come back for every exam.”

One 9/11 responder stresses the importance of returning for medical follow-up exams



Dayne Clarke

Dayne Clarke arrived at the World Trade Center minutes before Building 7 fell. As a mechanic for the New York City Transit Authority, he brought bulldozers to the site and set up light towers so firefighters could work through the night.

Mr. Clarke spent several days straight on

the pile when the dust was thickest. During his first medical exams by this program, his doctor found that he had no significant health problems related to his WTC work. When they came back for his second medical exam, however, the story was different. Dr. Iris Udasin at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey found illnesses that were related to his exposure to Ground Zero dust during his follow-up medical monitoring visit.

Here is what these Mr. Clarke has to say about the need for 9/11 responders to keep track of their health:

I came for my first exam in 2003 because of

the advice for us to get checked out, and to keep going every year and a half, in case anything happened. When I went for my second exam, it was both because it was time, and because a couple of guys I work with have chronic sinus problems. A few months before that, my sinuses and ears were clogging up. I have allergies, but they usually clear up. This time, it wouldn’t go away. I thought, let’s check it out.

I went to my own doctor, and he gave me sinus medication. He wanted me to use it for a month, but it didn’t seem to be doing much. I went to an ear, nose and throat doctor who wanted to drain my ears,

but said nothing about my sinuses. When I went to see Dr. Udasin, she gave me a nasal saline wash for my sinuses, which has helped. She also referred me to another ear, nose and throat doctor.

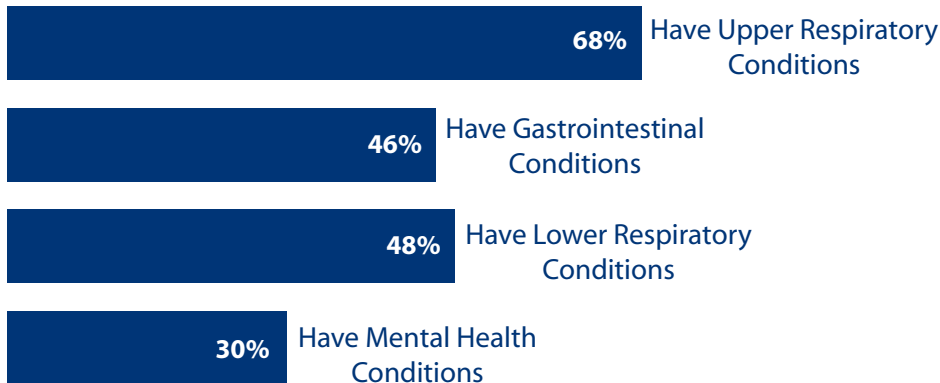
Whatever happens, next year around this time I’ll be making another appointment [medical monitoring examinations are available every 18 months]. I’ll come back for every one.

The program has done quite a good job so far. I think people who are in the program should come back before anything happens. I don’t think they should wait until they get sick. They say prevention is better than a cure.

WTC MEDICAL MONITORING AND TREATMENT PROGRAM DATA

9/11 RESPONDERS WHO HAVE RECEIVED MONITORING EXAMINATIONS – 23,704

Number of people treated for 9/11-related conditions – 5,286



*Percentages add up to more than 100 because some patients have more than one condition.

AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2007

The State of Congressional Funding for WTC Programs

Congress continues to consider legislation to secure more funding for the WTC medical programs. In addition, legislators are considering whether to reopen the WTC Victims' Compensation Fund (VCF), which expired at the end of 2003.

There have been several recent hearings about the need for more funding for the medical program and about the difficulties faced by responders living outside of the NYC area. The House

Judiciary Committee held the first hearing on extending the VCF to cover rescue and recovery workers who can no longer work because of their WTC-related illness. Kenneth R. Feinberg was the Special Master of the VCF, and he testified at the hearing.

At all the hearings, participants in the WTC medical programs provided valuable testimony about their health problems and the help they have received from the programs.

9/11 Worker Protection Task Force Issued Recommendations to New York State

The September 11 Worker Protection Task Force was chartered by a New York State law that gave public sector workers who were 9/11 responders a presumption on WTC-related illness on their disability pensions. The 19-member group is appointed by the governor, state legislative leaders, state labor and health officials, and the mayor of New York City. Members include Mayor Michael Bloomberg, union leaders, and doctors with extensive knowledge of 9/11 health effects.

On March 4, the Task Force produced a report on how to change the World Trade Center disability law in both state and city public retirement systems. They produced seven recommendations that are meant to allow more public employees who have WTC-related illness or injuries to file for disability pensions with a WTC presumption.

The recommendations include:

- ⦿ Eliminate pre-employment physical examinations as an eligibility requirement for non-uniformed workers.
- ⦿ Eliminate requirement of 40 hours on eligible work sites if workers were there for the first two days but had to leave before working 40 hours.
- ⦿ Expand location boundaries for coverage.
- ⦿ Cover state and county correction officers and deputy sheriffs outside New York City if they meet the presumption requirements.

The report was sent to the Governor's office for review. The recommendations will only take effect if the state legislature passes a bill to do so.

"They are not a panacea or a quick fix," said Lee Clarke, Director of Safety and Health, AFSCME DC 37. "They are only a beginning."

For a copy of the interim report, go to: www.wtcexams.org and click on "Worker Protection Task Force Interim Report."

Workers' Compensation Registration Deadline is August 13, 2008

"I am not sick now and hope that I don't have any effects in the future from my 9/11 work. But I want to have every protection in place in case something happens, so I have already registered for the Workers' Compensation benefits. Do it today and protect yourself and those you love."



—Doris Robinson, WTC Responder

REGISTER NOW TO PROTECT YOUR RIGHT TO FUTURE WORKERS' COMPENSATION BENEFITS

As a worker or volunteer exposed to hazards after 9/11, you can file for Workers' Compensation if you become sick in the future. A New York state law lets 9/11 responders preserve the right to file for benefits for the rest of their lives—but you must register to qualify. Registration forms must be received by the Workers Compensation Board by August 13, 2008.

Register now if you did rescue, recovery or cleanup work, either as a volunteer or for pay, between Sept. 11, 2001, and Sept. 12, 2002, in any of the following locations:

- anywhere in Manhattan south of Canal or Pike Streets, or
- on the barge operation between Lower Manhattan and Staten Island, or
- at the Staten Island landfill or the New York City morgue.

Register now, even if you have not gotten sick, or if you have already filed a Workers' Compensation claim. This will allow you to apply for Workers' Compensation for any WTC-related illnesses that may come up later in your life. *If you fail to register before the deadline, you will lose the right to file future Workers' Compensation claims for 9/11-related illness.*

For more information on how to register your WTC-12 form, call your WTC Medical and Treatment Program clinic or 888-702-0630.

Save the Date!

WTC Responder Day – Saturday, June 14, 2008

A day to honor the men and women who toiled selflessly in the days, weeks and months after September 11, 2001, to bring New York City back on its feet.

Events include:

- ⇒ A City Council proclamation of June 14 as WTC Responder Day
- ⇒ A “Speak-Out” where responders read aloud stories about their experiences after 9/11; it will take place in a public space and continue throughout the day*
- ⇒ An educational gallery exhibit documenting the work of 9/11 responders
- ⇒ A concert featuring music by responders for responders
- ⇒ Events for responders and their families, from art and music therapy to activities for children

*TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SPEAK-OUT, PLEASE CALL 212-241-6307.

LOCATION: Ground Zero site and other spots throughout lower Manhattan.

For more information, please call 212-241-6307 or write to wtcexams@mssm.edu



WTC Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program

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Address Service Requested

The World Trade Center Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program Data and Coordination Center

Mount Sinai School of Medicine
One Gustave Levy Place, Box 1057
New York, NY 10029
Phone: 888-702-0630

We welcome feedback.

To update contact information or clinical center preference, call us or visit www.wtcexams.org and click on “Forms.”

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