

PACIFIC RIM COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2005

PHILIP MORRIS, EDITOR

HELEN CHIU, PRESIDENT

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Professor Helen Chiu

In the last few weeks, many of us have been shocked and grieved to learn about the havoc wreaked by the tsunami disaster in South Asia. The immediate response to such a big-scale natural disaster is to offer basic human needs of food, shelter and medical treatment, in parallel with the rescue efforts for survivors. It is very encouraging to see that many countries and organizations have been very prompt to offer financial support and physical assistance.

In the aftermath of the disaster, we know that psychological impact to the survivors will be a major challenge in the coming

months. The Board of Directors of PRCP has a great concern about how to address the mental health needs of the survivors, given the fact that there is a great shortage of mental health professionals in the affected countries. In this regard, we have contacted the WPA and WHO to see how PRCP can work together with the other organizations to offer assistance in the mental health aspects to the affected countries. We have been in contact with Dr. Okasha, the President of WPA and Dr. Deva, the WPA Zonal representative in South Asia as well as Dr. Murthy and Dr. Wang Xiang Dong of WHO. In addition, we have received offers of assistance from other associations including the APA and several Japanese organizations. Through our Board of Directors Prof. Noda, Prof. Nakane and Prof. Inoue, we have the support of the Japanese Society of Social Psychiatry and Japanese Society of Transcultural Psychiatry. Prof. T. Akiyama has also expressed support on behalf of the Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology. We are also exploring with Prof. Shinfuku to co-organize an international symposium on Disaster Mental Health in Kobe in late February.

WPA has now set up "The WPA Tsunami Program" consisting of a Steering Committee, Task force (Functional) Committee and Advisory Committee; and PRCP will be involved in the Task force (Functional) committee.

I would also like to inform our Fellows and Members that the Board of Directors of PRCP has decided that we should aim to:

1. Work with other organizations to provide training to the mental health workers in the affected countries.
2. Develop the PRCP website as a resource for materials and other web links for information on managing mental health aspects of disasters.

In this regard, we would like to invite our Fellows and Members to contribute to this very meaningful initiative, and to explore if you or your colleagues are available to help in the training.

We will keep our Fellows and Members update on the progress through our Newsletter and website.

SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT

With the massive response in from countries around the world in providing aid to the regions on the shores of the Indian Ocean affected by the 26 December 2005 tsunami, the PRCP is planning to provide psychiatric help to the people in this region in conjunction with the World Psychiatric Association. Members and Fellows of the PRCP come from various countries with

different professional, cultural and language backgrounds, interests and experience. In order to be able to utilize these assets and strengths among Members and Fellows, the Secretariat of the PRCP is asking those who are willing and able to provide assistance to kindly indicate their interest by giving us their names, contact details, their language

abilities (relevant to working with psychiatric colleagues and psychiatrically affected individuals), and the times they will be available for contact, by filling out the form attached and sending it back to the Secretariat.

Assoc Professor Eng-Seong Tan
Secretary General

Please find attached to this document a form to be returned to the secretariat if you can assist with this disaster.

Fax Number: 61393473457

Email Address: info@prcp.org

Postal Address: Pacific Rim College of Psychiatrists, University of Melbourne,
Dept of Psychiatry, Main Block Level 1 North,
Royal Melbourne Hospital Vic 3050 Australia.

EDITOR'S REPORT

Dear Colleagues, little did we know when we were sending out the last newsletter in early December 2004 celebrating the success of the scientific meeting in Hong Kong that the world and particularly South Asia would be visited by the earthquake and tsunami disaster in the Indian ocean. The tsunami has taken the lives of over 200 000 people and left over a million others without food, water, shelter and basic services. A massive and heroic relief effort is being undertaken by the affected countries and by contributions from international agencies, nations and individuals from around the globe. The executive officers of the Pacific Rim College of Psychiatrists have determined that the college will make a compassionate, thoughtful, and practical contribution to the recovery effort for this disaster. Although the primary attention of the immediate response is the provision of food, water, shelter and basic medical care, it is expected that the psychological consequences of this disaster will be enormous. In response, the PRCP will make a contribution to the recovery effort for individuals suffering from the mental health consequences of the disaster. The college response includes the following initiatives.

1. The PRCP will participate in the World Psychiatric Association's tsunami program. Prof Helen Chiu, president of our college, will become a member of the task force (functional) committee of the WPA tsunami program.
2. The PRCP plans to co-organize an international symposium on disaster mental health relief with the Japan Society of Social Psychiatry to be held in late February at Kobe University Japan. This meeting was originally designed to review the

mental health consequences of the Kobe earthquake ten years ago. Following the tsunami disaster the meeting will now provide an opportunity to review the most appropriate methods of helping mental health recovery of those affected by the tsunami disaster. Psychiatrists and mental health workers involved in disaster recovery efforts in the affected countries will be invited to the meeting. Prof Helen Chiu and PRCP board of director's member's Prof Noda, Prof Nakane and Prof Inoue will represent our college at this meeting. All PRCP members and fellows who have a direct involvement in the recovery effort or who are interested in assisting would be welcome to attend this meeting.

3. The PRCP will work with other international health organizations (WHO, WPA) and national mental health psychiatric associations both in the disaster affected countries and in countries assisting with the recovery effort to provide assistance and training for mental health workers engaged in the relief effort. The structure of this training program has not yet been determined and will develop from the work of the WPA functional committee taskforce, the deliberations of the WHO and the results of the Kobe meeting on the disaster mental health relief.
4. Our College will identify professional resources within our membership that can assist with supporting colleagues who are working in the disaster affected countries in a direct way either in a one-to-one peer support or 'buddy' role, or as a contributor to assistance and training programs for mental health workers. In order to assist the college to undertake this task we would be grateful if you could fill out the accompanying form in this newsletter and either email the information or fax or post the form back to the PRCP secretariat (email info@prcp.org ; fax 61393473457, phone 61383446336, postal address PRCP, University of Melbourne, Department of Psychiatry, Main Block Level 1 North, Royal Melbourne Hospital Vic 3050 Australia). Important information that needs

to be identified includes: your language skills (especially for the countries mostly effected by the tsunami disaster - Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar/Burma, Maldives, Sri Lanka, India, Somalia); your experience in mental health responses to victims of trauma, traumatic loss or disaster; your willingness to be a support person to our colleagues working in the affected countries; and your willingness to participate/teach in training programs. The support of PRCP members and fellows for colleagues working in the affected areas will be a very tangible way of expressing our concern for colleagues and individuals affected by this catastrophe.

5. The PRCP web site (www.prcp.org) will be developed as a resource for accessing printed materials and web links to other sites which provide information on managing the mental health aspects of disasters. A list of resource materials and web links that are now on the College web site is provided with this newsletter.
6. The mental health response and recovery efforts to the tsunami disaster will become a main theme for the next PRCP scientific meeting in Taiwan in 2006.

The progress of all these PRCP initiatives to assist with the mental health response to the tsunami will be reviewed in upcoming newsletters.

I have described the initial steps of our Colleges' response to this tragic event. I expect that there will be other initiatives that will be developed over the next few months. These will be reported as they arise. I hope that all fellows and members of the College will consider participating in some way in the college relief efforts. Please return the information form attached with this newsletter.

Dr Philip Morris
Editor

LINKS ON THE PRCP WEB SITE

- NSW Institute of Psychiatry, Disaster Mental Health Response. An education resource for mental health professionals involved in disaster management http://www.nswiop.nsw.edu.au/Resources/Disaster_Handbook.pdf
- Coping with Stress & Coping personally after the tsunamis
- David Baldwin's Trauma information page <http://www.trauma-pages.com/>
- USA Dept of Health and Human Services <http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/EmergencyServices/>

www.prcp.org

- The National Centre for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – Disaster Mental Health <http://www.ncptsd.org/disaster.html>
- WHO – South Asia Earthquake and Tsunami <http://www.ncptsd.org/disaster.html>
- Resources for Therapists & Counselors Working With Tsunami Survivors <http://kspope.com/torvic/Tsunami.php>
- Trauma Prevention and Crisis Management http://www.empty-memories.nl/www_16.html#preven