

Chiropractic at 'Ground Zero'

Note: click on photos for larger images

by **Robert Davis, D.C.**

We'll never forget the morning of Tuesday, September 11th, 2001. Like so many of you, I was at my office seeing patients. Everyone has a story and I'd like to share mine with you.

On this particular day, I opened my office at 7:30 a.m. It was a beautiful morning and I had risen early to go for a run in Central Park. I even watched the sunrise for the first time in a while. Little did I know the turn of events to follow.



At about 9 a.m., the phone rang. It was my sister. "Are you OK," she asked.

"Why, what's wrong?," I responded.

She continued, "A plane just hit the World Trade Center."

"What?!"

I turned on the television in my waiting room and watched in disbelief as the billows of smoke spewed from Tower 1. It was surreal. I didn't know how to feel. Then the news commentator said, "Oh my God, another one!"

As if that wasn't enough of a shock, my assistant, Elizabeth, and I watched as a second plane exploded into Tower 2. I'll never forget what followed. We watched as the Twin Towers collapsed into a cloud of smoke with thousands of innocent people trapped inside. I felt sick to my stomach.

For the next couple of days, I stayed glued to the television. I was torn between feelings of helplessness, fear, anger and a sense of duty. What can I do? How can I help? I decided to go down to the disaster site and help the rescue workers.

My friend, Dr. Jeffrey Osterman, and I grabbed our portable tables and jumped into a yellow cab. We headed to West Side Highway, which runs along the Hudson River. We both were shocked into silence as the military presence increase the closer we got to the site. Lower Manhattan had



...they wouldn't let us down any further in the cab. A police officer offered us a ride with a man delivering supplies a little further south.

At one point, we were turned away by another officer. We thought it might be the end of the line, but didn't want to give up, so we headed east on foot.

After a few blocks, we hit Greenwich Street. I walked up to another police officer and showed him my ID and explained that we were doctors and needed to get down to the site to care for the rescue workers. We got through. The last challenge was a military checkpoint. To our amazement the MP looked at my ID and said, "Oh, you're chiropractors. Go down to the corner of Chambers Street and set up there."

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We were very surprised to discover three other chiropractors with their tables set up on the corner four blocks from "Ground Zero." We set up our tables and went to work. We adjusted fire fighters, police officers, military personnel, steel workers and just about anyone who walked close enough to us -- *anyone* who wanted an adjustment.

All the workers had to walk towards our station when they took their mandatory breaks and at shift change. Using Torque Release Technique analysis, I adjusted guys wearing climbing harnesses, fireproof gear and even bulletproof vests. A lot of them were sweaty, dirty and they were all exhausted. They were on 12-hour shifts and working their tails off. They needed someone to care for them and we were there to provide our service.

A few D.C.s came by and set up for a while and then left to go to different areas. As it started to get dark, things calmed down a bit so Dr. John Gehrich and I decided to make a move to get closer to the center of the disaster. We got through the military gate with our tables because most of the guys at the gate had been adjusted throughout the day.

We went into the Red Cross facility and adjusted a few volunteers and some medical doctors. One of the Red Cross directors asked if we wanted to help them bring supplies down to Ground Zero. We agreed. They supplied us with gas masks, helmets and goggles.

As our group headed out with supplies, we grew more and more silent the closer we got. I couldn't believe the destruction. The streets were filled with debris and the buildings adjacent to the Towers had visible sections destroyed, windows blown out and scorched black. I walked by the remains of 5 World Trade Center. I realized that I had been in that building for two hours at the Office of Taxation and Finance only a day before the attack. I wondered if anyone I'd spoken with on Monday had been killed.



As we turned the corner, I saw the horrific site. Rescue workers and machines were picking through a mountain of jagged steel. There were still visible fires burning inside the wreckage glowing red.

My adrenaline was pumping because of our previous warning, "If you hear a siren go off drop everything and run." The siren meant a building might collapse. I asked one of the rescue workers which building was the Millennium Hilton. He pointed to the building 20 feet away. That didn't exactly relax me since the news had been reporting the building's instability all day. I prayed that I would not have to find out if I was faster than a falling building.

Even at Ground Zero, we continued our mission of adjusting as many people as we could get our hands on. Everyone was extremely thankful for our efforts. Most people don't realize what nerve stress is until it's gone.

Everyone at the scene was experiencing extreme levels of physical stress (some of them were filling five-gallon buckets with debris, which unfortunately included body parts), chemical stress (you had to be crazy not to wear a face mask with all of the airborne carcinogens set free from the explosion) and emotional stress beyond measure (most of the people there lost "brothers" whom they were hoping to find alive, protected by a pocket in the wreckage).

I left that evening understanding the gravity of what had truly happened. It was no longer an on-going TV movie. It hit home in a big way what these truly evil human beings had done to destroy as many lives as they could.

The next day, I went down to the scene again, this time with another friend, Dr. Michael Weintraub. We had a much easier time getting through the military and police checkpoints. I had adjusted most of guys working and they let me right through. It was a great feeling to walk, table in hand, where the press couldn't even get through and having MP's and police officers I met the day before wave hello. The power of the adjustment!

This day I decided to stay put. I had no desire to get any closer to Ground Zero. We set up our tables and started adjusting. Soon after we got there, two other D.C.s -- Dr. Glen Scarpelli and Dr. John Albanese -- came by and set their tables up also. Everything was going great.



We noticed two Ford Expeditions pull up and a few Secret Service agents got out to check over the area. Governor Pataki then appeared on the scene. He spoke to a few rescue workers and volunteers as the cameras followed him. The press agent must have thought our presence was press worthy, because he asked us to meet with the Governor on the street. We spoke with him for a few minutes, letting him know the importance of keeping the nervous system of the rescue workers clear through chiropractic adjustment.

I know many in our profession would have loved to come to New York City and help out. One of the firemen I adjusted told me that "the best thing anyone can do now to help out is continue to support them and pray for their safety." I was so impressed to see how many chiropractors were in the area. We truly have a wonderful profession with men and women who give out their abundance to help others in need.

God bless America and chiropractic.

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