

January 2004
Vol. 29
No. 1

U.S. \$4
CAN \$5

JEMS

JOURNAL OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

2004 PLATINUM RESOURCE GUIDE





Israel Miranda

N.Y. Union Leader Urges Detoxification of Chemically Exposed EMTs, Paramedics

Following revelations that federal officials underplayed the dangers of toxins in the air at the World Trade Center following the Sept. 11 attacks, a leader of New York's Local 2507, Uniformed EMTs and Paramedics, FDNY, is urging broad implementation of an innovative program intended to cleanse the body of toxic residues.

Israel Miranda, the union's recording secretary and former health and safety officer, is convinced that a program that combines exercise and sauna bathing with a regimen of vitamins and minerals can help rescue workers overcome some of the worst effects of their toxic exposures. To date, more than 165 rescue workers have completed the detoxification program—developed by L. Ron Hubbard—at a medical facility blocks from Ground Zero.

Miranda, who has referred 15 people for detoxification, is encouraged by the results. "After a week or two on the program, they start to look and act like themselves again," he says. "They get their energy back; they can interact with their kids again. They can sleep through the night and breathe comfortably without needing medication. In a couple of cases, [personnel] have been able to avoid forced retirement."

"The recent news about the exposures made headlines," says Apryl

McNeil, MD, medical director of the chemical detoxification facility. "But I don't think it came as much of a surprise to the [personnel] who were at the site. They could taste, smell and feel that this was the most toxic environment they had ever faced."

David E. Root, MD, MPH, a board-certified occupational medicine specialist, has supervised the detoxification of more than 4,000 individuals at his practice in Sacramento, Calif. He is senior medical advisor to the New York facility.

As increasing numbers of emergency workers fell prey to a range of lingering illnesses, Miranda and his firefighting colleagues began to search for treatments that could help them recover the level of health they need to function in jobs that are both physically and emotionally demanding. They learned about the Hubbard program and its two-decade history of use by physicians to treat chemically exposed workers. They contacted Root, as well as staff at the Foundation for Advancements in Science and Education (FASE), a Los Angeles not-for-profit organization that, for the past 20 years, has facilitated a continuously evolving body of studies on the program.

After several meetings, a project was formed to bring chemical detoxification to New York, with FASE President Keith Miller acting as project director. "All parties agreed that everything possible should be done to help the rescue workers," says Miller. "Though this program is still new to some, two decades of clinical experience and dozens of published papers have established it as an effective rehabilitative treatment."

Chemical detoxification is provided to rescue workers at no charge; nearly 100 donors, individuals and corporations have made contributions to make this possible. The project's current development priority is the establishment of additional facilities outside Manhattan, in counties where the majority of rescue workers have their homes.

"What we hear now is that even

the experts say they'll never fully understand the consequences of the WTC exposures," says Miranda. "That's not exactly comforting to our members. The worst thing that could happen would be for them to be left with nothing more than a 'wait and see' approach to their health problems. Detoxification is the only preventive option they're being offered. The fact that so many people are working to make sure that it remains available is greatly appreciated."

Hubbard, whose book *Clear Body Clear Mind* gives details of the detoxification program, is also the founder of the Scientology religion. Some have questioned the medical validity of the program, and—even though the treatment is delivered in a medical office that has no affiliation with the church—Miranda and other project supporters are occasionally asked about this subject.

"This is not about religion," Miranda says. "This is about making people feel better, giving people a better quality of life. The care from the medical doctors and staff is exceptional, and the results speak for themselves."

"It's legit; it's for real," Andy Perez, manager of Local 2507 tells *JEMS*. "It's a really good program. We've seen the towels these guys used and [witnessed] the toxins come out in the towels. I even know one guy who had cholesterol of 320 when he started the program, and it came down to 140."

"Millions are being spent on surveys that will take 10 or 15 years to get results," says Miranda. "Do I really need to wait 10 years for someone to come back and tell me that my people are not going to have a quality of life? I know that already. If these people don't get help for the symptoms they have now, they're only going to get worse." ^{JEMS}

For more information on the detox program, visit www.nydetox.org.