

Health-care professionals stuck by Iowa license laws

By Cindy Hadish

Emergency responders sat quietly, eyes closed, as acupuncturist Sue Dusterhoft inserted five needles into their ears Wednesday at Red Cross staff housing in Solon.

The treatment is said to relieve anxiety, promote relaxation and improve sleep.

It's something that could benefit victims and workers in flood-ravaged Iowa, said Susan Reed, national trainer for Acupuncturists Without Borders.

Because of the design of Iowa's licensing regulations, however, the group's out-of-state licensed acupuncturists have been unable to treat Iowa flood victims.

The same is true for out-of-state dentists and doctors who had hoped to offer a free clinic at Westdale Mall in Cedar Rapids this weekend.

Dentist Kevin King, who practices in the Chicago area, said the Tzu Chi Foundation's volunteers will be unable to treat Iowa flood victims.

The group, an international Buddhist service organization, still plans to hand out cash cards for flood victims at the mall this weekend.

King said volunteer doctors and dentists traveling to Iowa from Los Angeles, New York and other areas also could act as assistants to local dentists and doctors who volunteer at this weekend's clinic.

Bob Brammer, spokesman for the Iowa Attorney General's Office, said Iowa can request out-of-state assistance for health care or other licensed professionals, such as engineers or plumbers, who would be deemed licensed in Iowa to assist during a disaster.

The request must come through the State Emergency Operations Center.

Acupuncturists Without Borders has responded to Hurricane Katrina and wildfires in California among other disasters, Reed said.

"This is not like going to the doctor and getting a diagnosis," said Reed, who put her practice on hold in Portland, Maine, to spend 10 days in Iowa. "This is a very simple procedure."

Acupuncturists Without Borders uses a form of treatment said to relieve post-traumatic stress disorder.

The free treatments typically take 25 to 40 minutes, but can last as long as the patient desires, Reed said.

Dusterhoft, with a clinic in Washington, Iowa, has been allowed to treat flood evacuees, Red Cross workers and others because she is licensed in Iowa.

Reed said she would "treat all day if they would let me."

Other acupuncturists also are willing to come from out of state, she said.

The group has sessions scheduled for 1 to 8 p.m. today at S.T. Morrison Park in Coralville and also plans to be at Westdale Mall this weekend. The treatment is open to anyone. Donations are accepted but not required.

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On the Net

Acupuncturists Without Borders: www.acuwithoutborders.org

Tzu Chi Foundation: www.tzuchi.org/freeclinic