

WTC Health PROGRAM

2015-2016 YEAR IN REVIEW

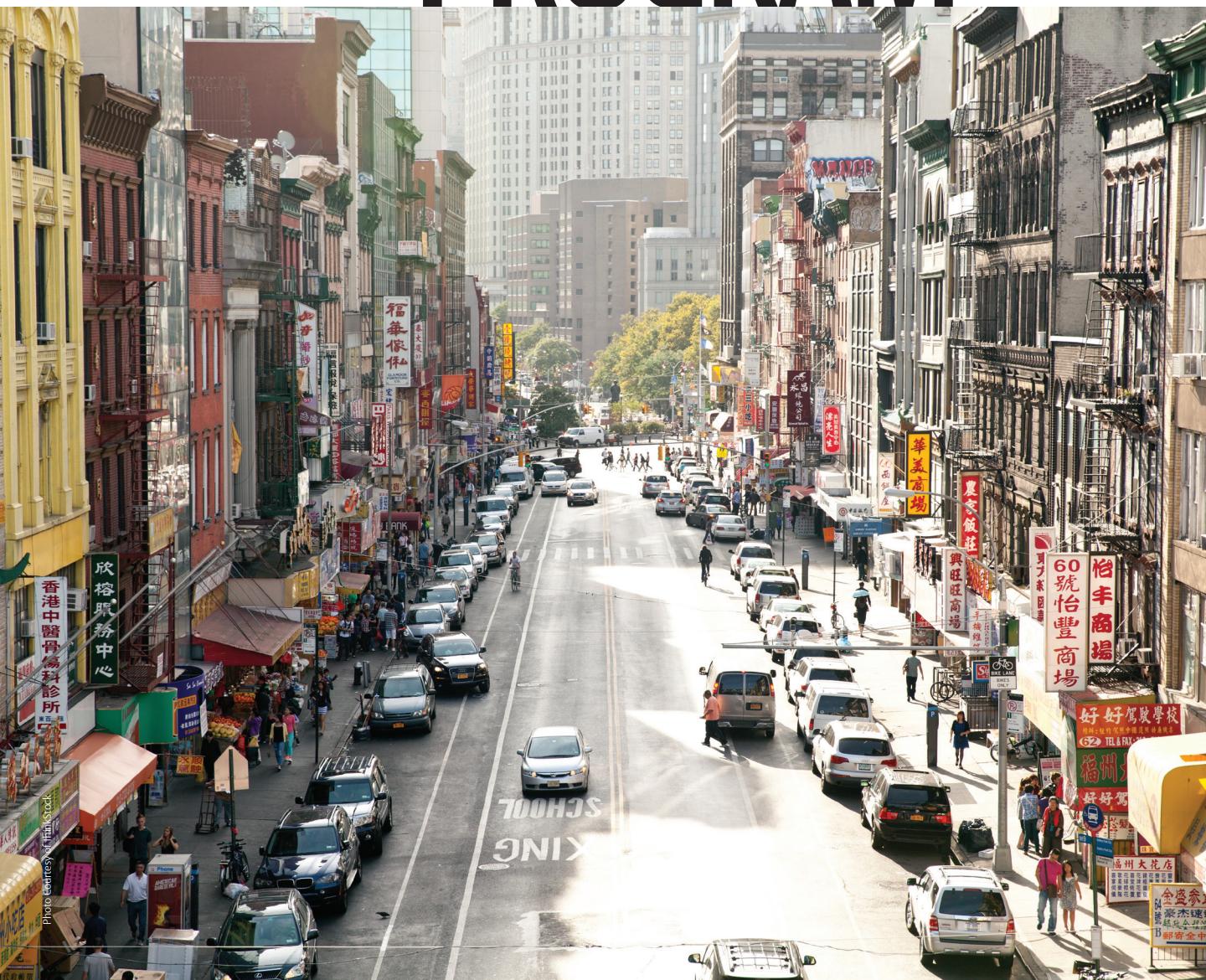


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9.11
WTC Health Program



Letter from the Administrator

This fall we will observe the 15th anniversary of the September 11th terrorist attacks. As the Director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and Administrator of the World Trade Center (WTC) Health Program, I have seen up close the heroism and resilience of 9/11 responders and survivors. It is an honor to serve you through the WTC Health Program.

As we reflect on the anniversary, we can also look to the future. I am pleased to report that funding for the WTC Health Program has been secured through 2090 under the reauthorization of the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act. This milestone ensures that members can rely on high quality monitoring and treatment of their certified 9/11-related conditions.

You can learn more about the WTC Health Program in this member newsletter. It provides a glimpse of the benefits we offer and shows how our Clinical Centers of Excellence (CCEs) and the Nationwide Provider Network (NPN) strive to provide high quality medical and customer support services. And perhaps most importantly, you will hear one member's story of cancer detection, which is a reminder of the vitally important care that our Program provides each day.

If you have any questions about the WTC Health Program or your benefits please reach out to our Call Center at 1-888-982-4748 or visit www.cdc.gov/wtc for more information.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J Howard".

John Howard, M.D.
Administrator, World Trade Center Health Program





Photo Courtesy of ThinkStock

WTC Health Program

Extended Until 2090

On December 18, 2015, President Obama signed a law to extend the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act of 2010. The Zadroga Act created the World Trade Center (WTC) Health Program and the Victim Compensation Fund (VCF). Below we explain the key highlights of this change.

How will the WTC Health Program change?

The extension will alter some details about how the WTC Health Program is managed, such as:

- * The law sets the Program's funding amount for the next 10 years, starting with \$330M. After this time, any increases will be tied to the Consumer Price Index, which is a common measure of how much things cost.
- * Before adding a new illness to the List of WTC-Related Health Conditions, an independent peer review of health research must occur.
- * The Administrator of the WTC Health Program now has 90 days to act on petitions to add health conditions.
- * The Government Accountability Office (GAO) will conduct a review and report on the Program's quality. The first review will occur in 2017 and then will happen every five years.

If you have any questions about the WTC Health Program, please email us at WTC@cdc.gov or call 1-888-982-4748.

How long will the Program now last?

The law extends the funding for the WTC Health Program through 2090.

How does the extension of the Program affect you?

You shouldn't notice any change to your day-to-day care. Your WTC Health Program benefits will continue as they have in the past.

Can people still apply for the WTC Health Program?

Yes! Enrollment is still open. Applications can be found online at www.cdc.gov/wtc or call 1-888-982-4748 for more information.

VCF Update

The Victim's Compensation Fund (VCF) was reauthorized for five years to provide financial assistance to those who were injured or have a physical illness from the September 11th terrorist attacks. Below are important reminders about how the WTC Health Program works with the VCF:

- * The VCF is a separate program from the WTC Health Program. It is managed by the U.S. Department of Justice.
- * If you are applying to the VCF, please note that you do not need a letter from the WTC Health Program for your VCF application. The VCF, with your permission, will contact the Program directly to confirm your membership and your certified health conditions.
- * While the WTC Health Program collaborates with the VCF, the VCF manages all claims and only they can provide you with an update on your case.

Please visit www.vcf.org or call 1-855-885-1555 for more information about the VCF.



School Donation to Help 9/11 Responders and Survivors

Small actions add up! Samantha, a 3rd grader at PS6 elementary school in New York City (<http://ps6nyc.com/>), has collected spare coins and small donations as part of the school's Change Makers initiative. This program encourages philanthropy and civic engagement among students at PS6. Over the school year, Samantha and her 3rd grade classmates collected \$230.56 for a cause she cares about-- supporting 9/11 responders and survivors. She came to this decision after visiting the National September 11 Memorial & Museum. The 3rd grader selected the FealGood Foundation, an Outreach and Education partner with the WTC Health Program, to receive the donation. The WTC Health Program thanks Samantha, her classmates, her school, and her friends at PS6 for caring! ■

Major Diet Study Coming to New York County

How do we understand the link between diet and health? Since 1960, the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) has studied the effect of food on the health of all people living in the United States. You can be a part of this important study. NHANES will be in New York County from Wednesday, July 20 through Monday, September 19. The WTC Health Program is not affiliated with NHANES but supports this study and encourages your participation. If you have any questions about this study please call the NHANES Office at 1-800-452-6115.

Stats about the Program

Total Membership=74,806
(as of 5/31/2016)

General Responders=48,209
FDNY Responders=16,890
Survivors=9,707

Services Provided
(from 4/1/2015 to 3/31/2016)

Monitoring or screening exams=30,332
Diagnostic evaluations=18,850
Members receiving some type of treatment=23,283

Most Commonly Certified Conditions

(as of 5/31/2016)

Anxiety Disorder (not otherwise specified)
Asthma
Cancer
Chronic Rhinosinusitis
Chronic Respiratory Disorder – Fumes/Vapors
Depression
Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
Sleep Apnea
WTC-Exacerbated Chronic Obstructive
Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

New CONDITIONS Added

The WTC Health Program will provide coverage for two new conditions—WTC-related acute traumatic injury and new-onset chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). This change went into effect on August 4, 2016. If you have one of these new conditions, talk to your CCE or NPN case manager to learn more about becoming certified, or approved, for treatment through the WTC Health Program. ■



Photo by Jin Lee, courtesy of the National September 11 Memorial & Museum

Jon Stewart Featured in New Videos to Promote the WTC Health Program

Comedian Jon Stewart lent his voice to encourage those affected by 9/11 to enroll in the WTC Health Program. Mr. Stewart joined John Feal (a 9/11 Responder) of the FealGood Foundation to film a short video promoting the Program. Mr. Stewart is a well-known advocate of 9/11 responders and all those who are now sick from the terrorist attacks. He is also a long-time supporter of the FealGood Foundation. Using humor and personal appeals, the video describes who is eligible for the Program and how to apply. The video was filmed at the National September 11 Memorial & Museum who donated their space for this project. Visit https://youtu.be/V0Rg27_qqug to watch the video. ■

Free Online Trainings about 9/11 Health

The WTC Health Program now offers free online trainings for healthcare providers about 9/11-related physical and mental disorders through Medscape, a leading medical education website. These trainings feature doctors from the WTC Health Program and other experts in 9/11-related healthcare. The web series is also available and appropriate for anyone who would like to learn more about 9/11 exposures and health.

Visit www.medscape.org/viewcollection/33376 to create a free account and access the trainings. If you are a medical provider, free Continuing Medical Education credits (CMEs) are available. ■

We Want to Stay in Touch

If you move, please let us know. Call 1-888-982-4748 to update your contact information with the WTC Health Program. ■

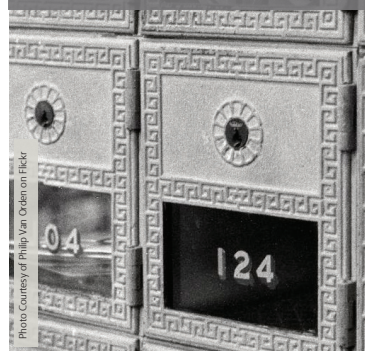


Photo Courtesy of Philip Van Orden on Flickr

Not • **Slowing Down**

by Sarah Palmer, Northwell Health

"I never would have known about the cancer if Dr. Wilson hadn't sent me for the exam."



Member Story

Santos Font, a member of the WTC Health Program, has been coming to the Northwell Health, Queens WTC Clinical Center of Excellence since 2009. As part of his annual monitoring exam, his WTC Health Program physician, Dr. Leigh Wilson, sent Mr. Font for a routine screening colonoscopy, which is a preventative measure for colorectal cancer for members over the age of 50. This type of cancer screening is a benefit of the WTC Health Program and available at all Clinical Centers of Excellence and through the Nationwide Provider Network.

Prior to the exam, Mr. Font did not have any cancer symptoms. He felt just as strong and energetic as ever. He saw the colonoscopy as a routine screening, so he was surprised when the surgeon found a large mass. Three lymph nodes also tested positive for cancer. Two weeks later, Mr. Font had surgery at Long Island Jewish Medical Center.

Mr. Font did not let cancer slow him down. None of his friends would have ever guessed that he had cancer. Even after his colon cancer diagnosis, he continued to go hiking and camping with them. He even rode 1,400 miles around the Northeast on his motorbike.

Just days after his last treatment, Mr. Font was back at work. His optimism and strength never faltered. He encourages others to seek care and asserts, "My experience with this program has only been positive."

Santos Font's story highlights the importance of cancer screenings. This year, over 136,830 people in the United States will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer and an estimated 50,310 will die of the disease. With certain types of screening, colon cancer can be prevented by removing polyps (grape-like growths on the wall of the colon) before they become cancerous. Several screening tests detect colorectal cancer early, when it can be more easily and successfully treated. Early stages of colorectal cancer don't usually have symptoms.

Many thanks to Northwell Health for sharing this inspiring story with us! ■





Art Therapy Program

One CCE's Creative Approach to Healing

If you visit the CCE that serves Survivors at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue you will find all the hallmarks of high quality healthcare—expert staff, state of the art equipment, and well-worn paintbrushes.

Yes, paintbrushes. You'll also find graphite pencils, watercolor palettes, and beads for making jewelry.



Since 2006, NYC Health + Hospitals/ Bellevue has offered Art Therapy to support those with 9/11-related conditions¹. Art Therapy is a mental health profession that uses drawing, painting, and crafting to help people access and process their emotions.

Over 100 Survivors have participated in the program. Members have called the weekly groups a “repair shop” or explained that art is “. . . a place to run to, a place of escape.”

Art Therapy helps people in many ways explains Dr. Irene Rosner David, Director of Therapeutic Arts at NYC Health + Hospitals/ Bellevue. “The program may be a way to soften anxiety and reduce stress, but it is most importantly a positive life enhancing activity.”

The program also motivates people to get out into a social forum, says Dr. Renee Obstfeld, who leads the weekly groups. Participants work on their own projects but they socialize and support each other. “Even during sessions in which everyone focuses on their own work,” she explains, “there is a dialog in the images.”

Finding Inspiration Again

The artwork created is on display each year during the group’s annual art exhibit. Hosted around the September 11th anniversary, the exhibits are a testament to the healing process. In the early days of the program “there were very clear pictorial references to 9/11,” recalls Dr. David. Paintings were more abstract, had jagged lines, and used darker tones and colors. “Dust”, “Lingering” or “Shifting” clouds were prominent themes in the program’s earlier art exhibits.

In the group’s upcoming show, however, you may be more likely to see bright flowers or pastel colored birds, conveying the more recent theme of “Resilience.” Dr. David explains that “over time images began to reflect healing and growth with increasing depictions of realism and nature, symbols of hope and resilience,” she says. “Today the artwork is often fuller in composition, lighter in color and theme. Clouds that were once dark may now be depicted as billowy and light.”

Art Therapy has helped members find “inspiration in their environment again,” observes Dr. Obstfeld. “The world becomes less frightening when you see it as source of inspiration for art.”

The group’s next art exhibit will be September 6-8, 2016, in the atrium at NYC Health + Hospitals / Bellevue (462 First Ave. at 27th St., NY). The show is free and open to the public. You can also see paintings from the Art Therapy program in a new calendar which will be released this fall to remember the 15th anniversary. To learn more about the Survivor Program at NYC Health + Hospitals/ Bellevue call 1-877-982-0107. ■

The WTC Health Program provides screening and treatment for a specific list of 9/11-related conditions, but you may be eligible for services outside of the Program, such as support groups, workshops, and social events. Be sure to speak with your doctor, social worker, or benefits counselor to learn more about events and services in your community or through your CCE.

¹ The Art Therapy program is not covered through WTC Health Program funds, but has received support from hospital resources, city funding for 9/11-related care, and grants from the Art Therapy Outreach Center of New York.



Photo Courtesy of ThinkStock

When Your Health Won't Wait:

Using Emergency Services for 9/11-Related Illnesses

A medical crisis can't wait for the next available appointment. When you need emergency care for a certified 9/11-related health condition the WTC Health Program can help.

The Program defines a medical emergency as a serious medical or psychiatric condition that would result in a threat to life, limb, or sight, or when a person is an immediate risk to self or others.

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room if you have symptoms like:

- Severe or persistent bleeding
- Severe shortness of breath
- Sudden onset of severe abdominal pain
- Thoughts of harming yourself or others

In an emergency, quick action can save lives. Go right away to an emergency room or urgent care center. However, in all emergencies, you must notify the Program within 24 hours or on the next business day to coordinate ongoing care and to ensure you receive proper approvals for treatment. Please note that the Program cannot cover emergency care services that are not related to your certified 9/11-related health conditions.

For more details about your emergency medical benefits visit <http://www.cdc.gov/wtc/memberhandbook.html> to read the member handbook. To request a printed copy of the handbook please call 1-888-982-4748.

PTSD and Smoking: Is there a Link?

Could Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) make it harder to quit smoking? Perhaps, concludes a 2015 study by the WTC Health Registry. The Registry looked at smoking rates over a 7–9 year period among 34,458 adults who were directly affected by 9/11. While overall smoking rates declined 27% during this time, those with PTSD were much more likely to keep smoking. When researchers compared groups, they found those without PTSD were almost twice as likely to quit smoking compared to those with PTSD. Researchers called for more support to help those with 9/11-related PTSD who wish to quit smoking.

Your WTC Health Program provider can help you manage PTSD while you quit. The Program offers tools to help you quit smoking, such as counseling and medicines to help with cravings. Visit your CCE or NPN provider or call 1-888-982-4748.

Interested in learning more about 9/11 health? Visit the WTC Health Registry's website at www.nyc.gov/html/doh/wtc/html/registry/registry.shtml to read their annual reports, research updates, and sign up for NYC 9/11 Health Update, a bimonthly e-newsletter covering the latest 9/11 health news.

Source: Welch, A., Jasek, J., Caramanica, K., Chiles, M., Johns, M. (2015). Cigarette smoking and 9/11-related posttraumatic stress disorder among World Trade Center Health Registry enrollees, 2003–12. *Preventive Medicine* Volume 73, April 2015, Pages 94–99

Here for You

Scottie Hill helps members understand their benefits.

When did you first start working with 9/11 health issues?

In December of 2002, I worked at Mount Sinai for a program called Health for Heroes that provided medical and mental health care for WTC responders. I loved it! I learned just as much, if not more, from WTC responders as they did from me.

How do you now help members of the WTC Health Program?

I currently work on a project to streamline benefits counseling across all WTC Health Program CCEs and the NPN. The goal of the project is to make sure each Program member has access to the same benefits counseling services, expertise, and knowledge, no matter where they get care. Although I no longer work directly with members, I do so indirectly.

Can you give an example of how benefits counseling helps members?

I worked with a member who was totally disabled from a 9/11-related condition. He lost his income, and his family was facing eviction from their apartment. He was eligible for a large compensation award from the NYS Crime Victims Board, but needed specific documentation from his Program doctor, workers' compensation, and Social Security Disability in order to access it. Benefits counseling helped him secure what was needed, negotiate the various systems involved, and submit the appropriate documentation. He received the compensation award, and he and his family were able to stay in their home.

What can members do if they have questions about their benefits?

Each Program CCE and the NPN can provide benefits counseling services and answer questions about Program benefits. Members can request an appointment with their benefits counselor.

What do you like best about your job?

I very much value the honor to work with and on behalf of WTC responders and survivors. It is truly a privilege. From our members, I have learned loyalty, commitment, selflessness, the value and importance of work and community, and resilience.



What is benefits counseling?

Benefits counseling helps members to identify the benefits they may be eligible for through the WTC Health Program and other assistance programs. It also helps explain how to apply for those benefits. Benefits counselors may refer members to external benefits experts as needed to help the member access benefits.

Benefits counseling is comprised of seven different service areas:

1. Program Benefits Counseling
2. Workers' Compensation Counseling
3. September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (VCF) Assistance
4. External Work-Related and Disability Benefits Counseling
5. Social Services Assistance
6. Cancer and Transplant Care Resources Assistance
7. Care for Non-Covered Conditions Assistance

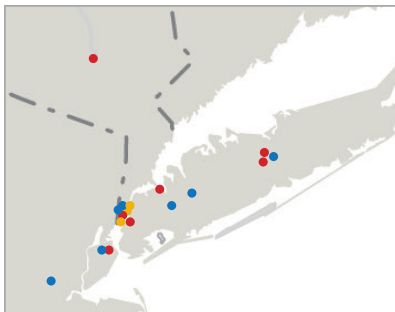
World Trade Center Health Program

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World Trade Center Health Program Locations

For a more detailed list, including a Clinic Center map, please visit the Program's website at www.cdc.gov/wtc/clinics.html or call the WTC Health Program at 1-888-982-4748.



- **General Responder
Clinical Centers of Excellence**

ICAHN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AT MOUNT SINAI

Selikoff Centers for Occupational Health
Telephone: 1-888-702-0630
Locations: Manhattan and Staten Island

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Department of Occupational and
Environmental Medicine
Telephone: 1-212-263-7335
Location: Manhattan

NORTHWELL HEALTH

Telephone: 1-718-267-2420
Location: Queens

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, STONY BROOK

Telephone: 1-631-855-1200
Locations: Islandia and Mineola
(contact main clinic first)

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Robert Wood Johnson Medical School
Environmental & Occupational Health
Sciences Institute
Telephone: 1-848-445-0123
Location: Piscataway, New Jersey

- **Fire Department City of New York
(FDNY) Clinical Center of Excellence**

FDNY Bureau of Health Services
Telephone: 1-718-999-1858
Locations: Brooklyn, Staten Island,
Bayside, Brentwood, Middletown,
Commack and Manhattan

- **Survivor Clinical Center of Excellence**

NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS

Telephone: 1-877-982-0107
Locations: Bellevue Hospital,
Gouverneur Healthcare Services,
and Elmhurst Hospital Center