

My comment is related to the following:

I am a current patient in the World Trade Center Health Program with RAD, asthma, acid reflux and toxic encephalopathy as a survivor of the attacks in NYC. I lived across the street from the WTC and was in the toxic cloud. My apartment sustained considerable damage and contamination from the dust and smoke that infiltrated the entire area from the time of the tower's collapse and for months afterwards. The office where I worked was also in the WTC vicinity on Broad St.. I was a self-employed computer programmer/technology consultant from 1985 up until the end of 2001. I was standing on the 14th floor terrace of the building where I lived on Albany St and South End Ave. when the south tower imploded and was blasted by a gust of vapor and then immediately afterwards completely covered by the dust and inhaled a significant amount of the blackened air. I was in that environment for several hours until evacuated by tug boat to Jersey City. I was nauseous and had a severe headache at the time. Later that evening I found my way to a family member's house in New Jersey. That night I had difficulty breathing and burning lungs. The next morning I was taken to the emergency room of the local hospital for chest x-rays and was told to see a pulmonary specialist. Days later welts appeared on my face, arms and legs on skin that was exposed to the dust. I tried to continue the work for my clients at the time but felt so sickened that I could no longer neglect the health issues that developed.

What I ingested from the dust that day circulated through my body causing extreme fatigue and affected various bodily functions for periods of time at random: the field of vision in both eyes went completely black only to return a few minutes later, another time I lost hearing for several hours. I had difficulty breathing. Brain function slowed down to the point where everyday tasks appeared as a slow moving slide show where I could see each step of a process neglecting to perform the most important steps. The condition worsened over the next few years. I eventually lost the ability to speak full sentences when I couldn't think of words. For a time I lost coordination of my hands. This became evident when I tried to dial a phone where the phone number was in mind but I wasn't able to touch the corresponding number on the keypad. Another time the lymph nodes in my groin area grew to the size of golf balls.

Over the years I sought help from many different doctors in a desperate attempt to find treatment for the myriad health issues I experienced: neurologists, endocrinologist, allergist, internists, gynecologist, pulmonary specialists, audiologist, optometrist, ENT and psychologist. None of these specialists had knowledge of treating chemical injury: they didn't know how to properly test for it, they didn't know who to refer me to, they didn't know what it meant to be exposed to the level of toxicity I had experienced. They couldn't help me. And I didn't know who could.

In 2005 I developed a chronic sore throat and hoarseness caused by a condition diagnosed as "silent acid reflux" which I continue to experience to date. After 5-6 years of following a self-prescribed detoxifying practice my brain function improved but not to the level I had prior 9-11. To date I have persistent "thinking" problems and poor thought retention where I struggle to keep more than one concept in mind at a time. I also found that I have difficulty learning new things which was never something I had trouble with as an ardent technology professional. I have difficulty performing procedural tasks - that is, anything requiring a systematic approach -- my thoughts become disorganized leaving me unable to perform the task correctly requiring several attempts, especially when the process requires the use of my hands. This is completely disabling for a computer programmer where the brain is the tool of the profession. I would like to rehabilitate this part of my brain so that I can work again. I haven't been able to do so since 2001.

I've recently learned that there are protocols in place for recovering from chemical injury that may help me at this point. The attached research paper, presented by a Dr. Grace Ziem at a conference sponsored by the NIEHS in August of 2001, also addresses the often misdiagnosed and incorrectly treated GERD and RAD associated with chemical injury to the body. I submit this comment to add treatment for chemical injury to the brain and body as part of the WTC Health Program according to the protocols introduced and proven beneficial by Dr. Ziem. The current program in place treats injury from particulates but omits explicit treatment for chemical injury as the source of brain damage, asthma, RAD, acid reflux and the variety of other illnesses caused by exposure to the environmental chemicals from the WTC. <http://mcsbeaconofhope.com/ziem.html>