

## WTC Health Program



### Monitoring and Treatment

Issue 1 • JULY 1, 2012

*"The biggest measure of success is to make sure everyone who qualifies for this program enrolls and receives the care they deserve."*

*Dr. John Howard  
Administrator  
WTC Health Program*

## Welcome

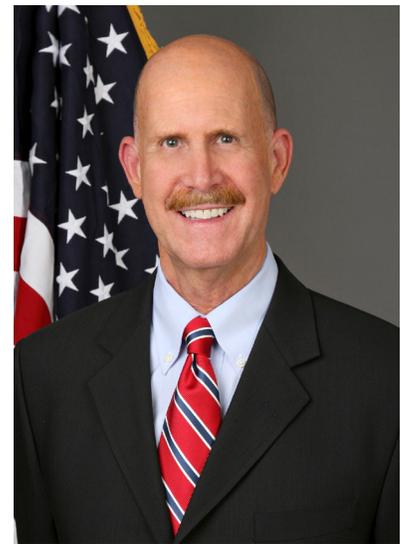
Welcome to the first issue of the World Trade Center (WTC) Health Program Newsletter. Our goals are to provide program news, share participants' stories and help eligible participants understand how to apply to the program.

The WTC Health Program was established by the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act of 2010 (the Zadroga Act). Congress passed the bill in December 2010 and President Obama signed the law into effect on January 2, 2011. The program opened on July 1, 2011. This newsletter celebrates that one-year anniversary. It is a good time to reflect on how we got here, what we've accomplished together, and where we are going.

The attacks on our country on September 11, 2001, were devastating. We all mourned the loss of innocent lives and the devastation wreaked by these acts of terrorism. For those who responded to the Pentagon, Shanksville, PA and the World Trade Center sites, as well as those who survived the attacks in New York, the mental and physical impact was tremendous. These events continue to greatly affect many of these people today.

In order to provide these responders and survivors with needed medical care, the Zadroga Act was passed. Since the program became effective last year, it has helped more than 60,000 people who were previously enrolled in the medical monitoring and treatment program continue to receive care, and in the last year, we've enrolled more than 1,200 new people. This medical care is delivered by seven clinical centers in the New York City area that were awarded contracts to provide medical

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# WTC Health Program NEWS

A National Program Serving 9/11 Responders and Survivors



S H A N K S V I L L E



N E W Y O R K C I T Y



P E N T A G O N

## MOST COMMON WTC Conditions

Many illnesses are treated by the WTC Health Program. Some of the most common WTC conditions include:

- Breathing problems (asthma, bronchitis, interstitial lung disease)
- Heartburn or reflux (such as Gastroesophageal Reflux Disorder-GERD)
- Inflamed nasal passages/sinuses (chronic rhinosinusitis)
- Mental health issues (anxiety, depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD])

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[www.cdc.gov/wtc](http://www.cdc.gov/wtc)

## WTC Health Program



Monitoring and Treatment

### PROGRAM STORY

## Gabriel Pacino

Responder

"This country is the best country in the world," said Gabriel Pacino, an Italian native who lives in the Bronx.

"If you're not lazy, you can improve your life. I came here when I was 14 years old and I went to work. I did anything I could do—break concrete, anything. I went to school at night. And I became a plumber, with the union."



On 9/11, Pacino and fellow construction workers were sent home from work. The next day, the superintendent called the crew together and asked if anyone was willing to help at Ground Zero. Pacino began volunteering "on the top of the pile" on September 12, 2001.

"A bunch of us, we raised our hands and went down there. We were there to clear and search for people," Pacino said. "I feel obligated to this country—to help, to give something back, for whatever they did for me."

When Pacino received a notice about the original Medical Monitoring and Treatment Program for responders, he'd been ill for some time.

"My girlfriend filled out the paperwork and sent it in," he said. Still, Pacino didn't believe his health problems could be connected to his 9/11 service.

His regular doctor "told me to go down (to the WTC clinical center) and get checked out. He said (the program) would pay, and that's why I should go. I set up an appointment and went down to the city."

Pacino receives his care at the Clinical Center of Excellence at Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

"From the people who work with the doctors, to the doctors—I tell you something. They treat me well," he said. "Through all of this, they take care of me whenever I call, or if I need medication...they send me everything.

"I feel like they treat me like I'm family. It started from the people who work at the front desk, and the doctors—the people who did my MRI. They are wonderful. I've been there since 2003. I'll never leave them. They explain things to me. They treat me very well."

When asked what he'd say to someone who didn't want to enroll in the WTC Health Program, Pacino didn't mince words. "I tell them 'you're stupid.' Believe me, that's the only way I know how to talk. I speak with honesty," he said. "I thank my girlfriend every day. I thought that I had a cold."

## PROGRAM STORY

# Lila Nordstrom

Survivor

Lila Nordstrom was in a drafting class when the first tower was struck. From the 10<sup>th</sup> floor of Stuyvesant High School, three blocks away, “we saw the whole thing happening,” she said.

Her teacher kept teaching. Downstairs, administrators were getting conflicting advice on evacuating the 3,000-student public school for gifted kids.

“I’m asthmatic and after the first building fell, we saw the dust cloud,” Nordstrom said. She left class for the nurse’s office. When the evacuation call came, students were told to walk north.

“I was on the street when the second building fell,” she said. “I ran for it, as far as I could.” She spent the next month at home in Chelsea, north of the disaster area. Her primary exposure came when Stuyvesant reopened on Oct. 9, she said.

“It had been used as a command center for first responders. The site they were taking debris to was next to the building. All of these fires were burning.” Soon, she said, “people started getting sick. My asthma did a real number on me. A lot of students were starting to get respiratory problems, nosebleeds, coughs.”

Although families asked if students could go to another school temporarily, they were turned down. And graduating from Stuyvesant seemed vital to getting into a good college. Nordstrom felt the choice was between “compromising our health or leaving our future.”

She went on to Vassar College, then moved to Los Angeles to start her TV writing career. By 2007, she began having serious acid reflux. It “can present as asthma symptoms or it can instigate (other) symptoms. It irritates the lungs. It causes coughing,” she said.

“I went into the program because, first, I have these symptoms I need to have treated. I am the only person in my family who has not outgrown childhood asthma,” she said. Secondly, “asthma medication is \$300 a month. And acid reflux – that’s \$190.”

Those were out-of-pocket costs until she enrolled. As a survivor, she uses Bellevue, part of NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation’s WTC Environmental Health Center. “And thanks to the fact that the program is national, I can now get prescriptions in L.A.,” she said.

“It’s been a really good experience for me,” she said. “It’s a lot easier to see doctors who are able to understand how things have gotten serious. They know what kind of treatments are working for other people who had the same type of exposure.”



Ethan Moses © 2011

## News Briefs

### Cancer coverage

Dr. John Howard, Administrator of the WTC Health Program, has proposed that the program cover treatment for certain types of cancer. Visit our website or watch for the October newsletter for updates.

### Brooklyn WTC clinic opens

WTC responders from Brooklyn now have a clinic closer to home. In May, Stony Brook Medical Center formally opened a new WTC Health Program clinic on the SUNY Downstate campus in Flatbush. Visit the WTC Health Program website at [www.cdc.gov/wtc](http://www.cdc.gov/wtc) to see a full list of clinics that serve FDNY, responders, and survivors.

### Heroes’ salute marks 10 years

The National September 11 Memorial & Museum hosted a tribute on May 30 for the first responders, construction workers, volunteers, relief workers, engineers and contractors who worked so long and hard at Ground Zero. The event marked the 10th anniversary of the formal ending date of the recovery operations on May 30, 2002.

## PROGRAM UPDATE

# How to Join the Program

*(Continued from cover page)*

monitoring and treatment. We've maintained a national network of providers that monitor and treat responders who live outside the New York City metropolitan area.

On June 13, we published a proposed rule to add certain types of cancers to the list of conditions the program covers. We based this decision on a hierarchy of methods, including expert recommendations of the World Trade Center Health Program Scientific/Technical Advisory Committee.

We will continue to work to improve the program, including establishing eligibility criteria for Pentagon and Shanksville, PA responders. We will expand the network of providers so that both responders and survivors who live outside the New York City metropolitan area can receive monitoring and treatment benefits near to where they live. This first year's work is just the start of providing eligible members with the care they need and deserve. The biggest measure of success is to make sure everyone who qualifies for this program enrolls and receives the care they deserve.

If you think you may be eligible, please call our toll-free number at 1-888-982-4748 or visit our website at [www.cdc.gov/wtc](http://www.cdc.gov/wtc). It is an honor to serve you.

*Dr. John Howard is a medical doctor and a lifelong advocate for workers' health.*

*Dr. Howard serves as the administrator of the WTC Health Program.*

The WTC Health Program provides health tests and medical care for people affected by the attacks on September 11, 2001. Please share this with co-workers, friends, and neighbors. The steps to enroll are:

1. **Figure out if you are eligible.** Visit [www.cdc.gov/wtc](http://www.cdc.gov/wtc) and click on the "Apply" button. Or, call toll-free: 1-888-982-4748 (1-888-WTC-HP4U). The program serves people in these four categories: Fire Department of New York City members; other NYC responders (police, workers, volunteers); survivors (people in the NYC disaster area); and Pentagon/Shanksville, PA responders.
2. **Gather the documents you will need.** You must provide documents showing where you were and/or what work you did on or after 9/11. Responders may get these from their work or their volunteer group. Survivors may use utility bills or store or restaurant receipts. The application form provides details on the kinds of documents you may submit, including letters from supervisors or co-workers. It also explains what to do if you cannot get documentation.
3. **Get the application form.** Download the form at [www.cdc.gov/wtc](http://www.cdc.gov/wtc) or call toll-free and we'll send you a copy: 1-888-982-4748 (1-888-WTC-HP4U).
4. **Fill out the form.** Be sure to give your daytime phone number, address, and email address, if you have one.
5. **Send in the form.** Be sure to include copies of your supporting documents. Fax toll-free to: 1-877-646-5308. Or mail to: WTC Health Program, P.O. Box 7000, Rensselaer, NY 12144.

## WTC Health Program



Monitoring and Treatment

FOR MORE INFORMATION about the WTC Health Program and enrollment, call:

**1-888-982-4748**  
**(1-888-WTC-HP4U)**

or visit the program website at:

**[www.cdc.gov/wtc](http://www.cdc.gov/wtc)**

This program is administered by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.