

## Report from the Field: Shaken Lives in Post-Quake Turkey

In 1999, two powerful earthquakes struck Turkey just months apart, leaving 25,000 people dead and 750,000 homeless. An estimated half a million survivors would suffer post-traumatic stress. EMDR HAP joined forces with the Turkish Psychologist's Association, Istanbul Branch, to implement a series of trauma-therapy training programs and establish volunteer-staffed clinics at the vast tent cities where displaced families gathered in the aftermath of the tragedy.

In planning the Turkish intervention, EMDR HAP coordinators were careful to consider the unique circumstances of the situation, and developed a modified training program that took into account not only native cultures and language, but the environmental and socio-political context as well.

The fact that so many therapists being trained were themselves experiencing post-traumatic disturbances from the collective experience of the earthquakes was an important consideration in how the clinicians would be introduced to EMDR. Extensive follow-through with trainees was integral to the project, and included supervised practicum with trauma survivors and ongoing peer support and consultation that continue to this day.

An estimated 12,000 people or more have been treated for trauma as a result of the HAP presence in Turkey.

Over the course of approximately seven months, HAP volunteers trained 159 therapists who subsequently used the EMDR method to treat earthquake survivors throughout the region. A follow-up survey conducted in May-June 2000 found that each trainee had performed, on average, 50 sessions of EMDR with survivors. In the first few months following the disaster, more than 10,000 sessions - for an estimated 2,000 people - had resulted from the HAP presence in Turkey, far exceeding the expectations set for the project. As of March 2003, we estimate that at least 12,000 people have benefited from EMDR as a result of the Turkey initiative.

A long-term study to evaluate the outcomes of the treatment in a sample of 45 adults has found complete remission of post-traumatic stress disorder in all individuals in the study, within an average of 5.1 sessions.

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"The statistics are important to this story," says Jim Knipe, Ph.D., EMDR HAP Project Coordinator for Turkey, "but the stats don't reveal the whole picture." The real success of the Turkey response, he says, "is told in the faces of children and adults who are now free of the images of horror that haunted them, and in the ongoing dedication of the therapists in Turkey who continue to use EMDR with effectiveness and purpose."

The HAP legacy in Turkey continues today; with a permanent trauma clinic in Istanbul that will not only provide therapy for individuals, but will also support the Turkish mental health community with educational programs and referral services. HAP volunteers have continued to conduct follow-up site visits and specialized training, and remain in communication with their Turkish partners in healing.