

MEDICAL NEWS

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Dr. Rachael Consoli

Delivering healing and teaching around the globe

By Staff Sgt. Courtney Davis
USAG Humphreys

CAMP HUMPHREYS, Republic of Korea – Rachael Consoli stepped out to stretch her legs on the streets of South Sudan. She took a deep breath and placed one foot on the street. After spending two weeks inside a convent delivering babies with nuns, this walk was needed. Her feet, with minds of their own, led her to a bridge. Before she could step foot on the bridge a young man stopped her in her tracks.



Dr. Rachael Consoli

“You cannot go any further,” he said. “You’re a spy.”

She turned around and suddenly, she felt the cold press of steel against her head.

“Now you stop.”

Origin Story

Consoli is an obstetric and gynecological surgeon at the U.S. Army Garrison Humphreys, Brian D. Allgood Army Community Hospital. She said the love of caring for other people stemmed from being the oldest of eight children. Consoli said oftentimes her mother would leave her in charge of her younger sister and brothers while she needed to run an errand. Also, her dad was a physician and would take the children to the clinic with him and allow them to take vital signs and distribute medication to patients.

“I felt thrilled when my dad asked us to help at the clinic,” said Consoli. “It was an honor to serve, and it was an honor to help human beings improve their health. I know being the oldest, and my dad allowing us to help, led me to where I am now.”

As a fourth grader Consoli was tasked to write her autobiography for class and said even then she knew she would travel the world as a physician and OB-GYN delivering babies. Consoli’s plan in her autobiography began with the desire of helping the lepers in Molokai, an island in Hawaii, since it was a remote place, she read about. As Consoli grew older, her passion to heal and serve humanity never died. She graduated medical school in 1995 followed by residencies and fellowships: training in robotics and minimal invasive gynecological surgery and certification

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U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Megan M. Beatty

U.S. Air Force Maj. Sandra Salzman, left, and Capt. Gregg Burrow, right, both 37th Airlift Squadron pilots, fly a C-130J Super Hercules aircraft over Zaragoza, Spain during exercise Chasing Sol, Jan. 25. This exercise marks the first time in more than a decade that the 37th AS has participated in Chasing Sol.

37 Air Squadron pilot physician paves way for women in aviation

By Airman 1st Class Madelyn Keech
86th Airlift Wing/Public Affairs

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany – Not unlike many other service members, U.S. Air Force Maj. Sandra Salzman, 37th Airlift Squadron pilot-physician, comes from a military family. This led her to begin her journey in the Wisconsin Air National Guard in January 2001 as an enlisted aerospace propulsion specialist, eventually becoming the only woman of the current 10 pilot-physicians in the

Air Force.

As a young girl, Salzman grew up living on bases heavily populated with pilots, which first ignited her interest in aviation. Salzman’s mother arranged many field trips to an aircraft simulator for her Girl Scout troop. As an adult, her husband also took her to one of his flying lessons, cementing her passion in flying.

“I realized I could do that and I would prefer to pilot than be a passenger,” Salzman said.

For one month, Salzman flew for two hours after work to obtain her private flying license. Then, she commissioned as an officer and retrained as a pilot. After completing pilot training, she applied to fly with her home station where she was ultimately denied a flying position.

Getting the answer “No” for flying was a familiar situation to Salzman and her family, she said.

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• Aviation (Continued from front page)

Her mother, retired U.S. Air Force Col. Lesa Juday, commissioned through the Reserves Officers' Training Corps in 1977 and attempted to pursue a career flying helicopters. However, she was also turned away.

Instead of letting it deter Juday from becoming a service member, she overcame the rejection to become a judge advocate general, or a military lawyer, and persisted in pursuit of her dreams while fighting for gender equality for women in the military.

Salzman used the same tenacity learned from her mother to keep pushing to accomplish her dreams and applied to three other Air National Guard units. She was accepted by all three, and chose to work with the 133rd Airlift Wing Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn., to fly Lockheed C-130 Hercules aircraft.

Once she arrived, Salzman learned she was the only female pilot in her unit, although there were female loadmasters and crew chiefs.

Salzman said the flying culture in the



U.S. Air Force Maj. Sandra Salzman

Air Force at the time was very different than today. Many women felt there was a mindset that being pregnant meant they didn't want to fly. Because of this, Salzman said women in her unit were hiding their pregnancies until they were unable to.

Although many of the women were healthy, some, including Salzman, struggled with high-risk pregnancies and wondered if it was related to flying while pregnant.

When Salzman's oldest child was born, he was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and Malignant Myopia, a medical condition affecting a person's nervous system and eyesight. She wanted answers and decided to pursue a medical degree and study pediatrics.

"Mom guilt is real," Salzman said. "When my son [was diagnosed], I didn't know if I caused it and that was scary."

Salzman said the diagnoses brought on many questions, most of which went unanswered.

"You want to know: Should I feel guilty or not?" Salzman said. "I went to medical school to answer that question, and to figure out how to raise my child properly because I felt like I had no idea how to do that either."

Before she could pursue her medical career, Salzman used her G.I. bill to pay for pre-med classes she hadn't taken with her undergraduate degree in psychology.

It took a year of struggling to balance her family, work and school, but Salzman continued taking classes during her lunch break and studying for an hour after she tucked her kids in at night. Finally, she earned all the necessary credits to start medical school.

"My personal goals were to continue to be a good mom and wife, be predictable in my schedule, and make time for my family every day – just like I scheduled time for homework," she said. "I would sometimes pick up my oldest son, who was five years old at the time, and bring him with me to the lunchtime class."

To continue making time for her growing family during schooling, Salzman made sure to schedule weekly dates with her husband and have face-to-face time with him each night.

"I wanted to make sure my family was not lost in the pursuit of my dream," Salzman said.

By 2013, Salzman transitioned to active duty after attending the Uniformed Services University School of Medicine. Like all military training, USU is free of charge to its students. Before graduation, Salzman changed paths from pediatrics to study flight medicine and became a flight surgeon, adding another skill to her arsenal.

After earning her doctorate, Salzman worked with the Defense Health Agency to develop The Air Force Autism Navigator, a resource clinic for military families with



U.S. Air Force courtesy photo

Retired U.S. Air Force Col. Lesa Juday (left), former judge advocate general, swears in her daughter, Maj. Sandra Salzman (right), 37th Airlift Squadron pilot-physician, after Salzman commissioned as an officer at the Academy of Military Science. Salzman is one of 10 pilot-physicians in the Air Force and is qualified as both a pilot and flight surgeon.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Megan M. Beatty

U.S. Air Force Maj. Sandra Salzman, 37th Airlift Squadron pilot, flies a C-130J Super Hercules aircraft over Zaragoza, Spain during exercise Chasing Sol, Jan. 25. Chasing Sol provided an opportunity to practice Agile Combat Employment concepts with NATO allies.

children who have autism. The Autism Navigator is part of the Exceptional Family Member Program. It provides permanent change of station resources, and aims to reduce the amount of time children wait for medical care between duty stations.

Salzman deployed in 2021 to the 435th Air Ground Operations Wing at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, where she felt another calling after making connections with Airmen assigned to the 37th Airlift Squadron. This time, it was to pursue a pilot-physician career through the Air Force Pilot-Physician Program.

The Pilot-Physician Program takes Air Force officers qualified as both flight surgeons and pilots, and places them in units who specifically request a pilot-physician.

Salzman was approved by U.S. Air Forces in Europe – Air Forces Africa to be stationed with the 37th AS in 2022, and is now one of 10 pilot-physicians in the Air Force. Out of those 10, she is the only

woman.

With her expertise as a pilot-physician, Salzman can make recommendations to commanders and policymakers regarding aerospace medicine and implementing human considerations and human factor mitigation across the Air Force to help ensure the safety of aircrew. Currently, she is acting as the operational subject matter expert in the Air Force working group considering policy on pregnancy in aviation.

"If you have multiple interests, you can pursue multiple things," she said. "My mother's message was always to follow your dream. You don't have to pick one thing, you just have to decide what you'll do next. The things you've done before can add together to make you more valuable."

Whether on or off duty, Salzman follows the example set for her by her mother – continuing the family legacy of paving the way for women in the military.

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METC dental instructor realizes childhood dream



Photo by Lisa Braun

Petty Officer 1st Class Caleb Gonzalez, left, an instructor in the Navy dental assistant program at the Medical Education and Training Campus, Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas, acts as a dentist while training a student in the dental assisting lab. Gonzalez, an instructor in the program, will realize a childhood dream when he begins dental school this summer.

By Lisa Braun

Medical Education & Training Campus

Petty Officer 1st Class Caleb Gonzalez, an instructor in the Navy dental assistant program at the Medical Education and Training Campus (METC), will realize a childhood dream when he begins dental school this summer.

Gonzalez attended Navy hospital corpsman training, or "A" school, at the METC on Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas in August 2011. He continued on to the Navy dental assisting program, or "C" school - the same program Gonzalez currently teaches - and graduated in February 2012.

Understanding that school was the key to his dream, Gonzalez was driven to continue his education. He earned an Associate of Science degree from Coastal Carolina Community College in Jacksonville, North Carolina, in August 2015. Immediately after he attended the dental hygiene program at Coastal Carolina Community College while simultaneously working on his bachelor's degree by going to night classes at Campbell University's extension campus on Camp Lejeune. Although he acknowledged that this was the most difficult part of his journey, he persevered nonetheless, earning an Associate of Applied Science in Dental Hygiene degree in May 2017, followed by a Bachelor of Health Science degree one year later.

Always knowing he wanted to be a dentist, Gonzalez credits a childhood memory for inspiring him. "Growing up, I visited a community dental health clinic that provided dental care to low-income families in a predominantly Hispanic town," Gonzalez said that he

was greatly impacted by these visits. "The Dentist would speak Spanish to my parents and showed me that I could use my Hispanic heritage to help other Hispanic families have welcoming experiences in patient care as I did."

After proudly serving in the Navy dental field for 11 years, Gonzalez knew it was time to follow his dream. "My passion for patient care and serving communities that lack access to dental care was the fuel that drove me to pursue a career as a dentist," he stated.

Gonzalez applied to several dental schools in June 2022; by December, he received multiple acceptance letters but chose to attend the University of Texas Health Science Center School of Dentistry in San Antonio. He begins classes this July.

In addition, Gonzalez learned in March that he was awarded a scholarship through the Navy Health Services Collegiate Program (HSCP). HSCP provides financial incentives for students in designated health care professions to complete degree or certification requirements and obtain a commission. Gonzalez will receive a commission as an officer in the Navy Dental Corps upon graduating from dental school in 2027.

"I'm so happy and grateful after waiting so long for these results," he enthused. "This scholarship means more to me than just supporting me through school, as it means I now have the opportunity to continue to serve in the Navy and contribute to the dental corps in an impactful position."

Gonzalez expressed his gratitude for the experience and opportunity the Navy gave him as a hospital corpsman in the dental field. "This chapter in my life gave me the leadership and patient care skills that made me an excellent candidate that resulted in eight acceptances into eight dental schools!" He also credits his family and friends, as well as his colleagues in the METC dental assistant program, whose support made his success possible.

Reaching this milestone has shown Gonzalez that dreams do come true. "It feels like I have been working towards this achievement all my life, as I always knew I wanted to be in the dental field since I was a child," he mused.

"Although it still feels unreal to me, this accomplishment has taught me that anything is possible through hard work, faith, and never giving up on your dreams."



Photo by Lisa Braun

Petty Officer 1st Class Caleb Gonzalez reviews a lesson with students in the Navy dental assistant program at the Medical Education and Training Campus on Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Gonzalez, an instructor in the program, will realize a childhood dream when he begins dental school this summer.

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• Healing

(Continued from front page)

in pediatric and adolescent gynecology surgery. She also completed a master's degree in public health.

"Pediatric and adolescent gynecology surgery is very useful traveling the world as one of the focuses is reconstructive surgery on patients born with some abnormalities in their genital or pelvic area," said Consoli. "We are charged with the mission to take care of them. We also work with 16-year-olds who haven't started their cycles. We can see if she needs surgery to fix the problem, or if we need to administer hormones."

Once Consoli finished her training, she became a diplomat of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and a Fellow of the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology which creates guidelines for health care professionals and educational material for patients, provides career support, facilitates programs to improve women's health, and advocate for members and patients. She then started to travel the globe as a volunteer surgeon and as a locum physician (a substitute for medical staff members in hospitals, clinics, or practices when they are ill or on leave). Being a volunteer opened doors for her to deliver babies all over the world and create Safe Motherhood Programs, a program providing expectant mothers with ultra-sounds, monthly check-ups, and information on birthing procedures. The program was established in places where maternal mortality rates were the highest. She has delivered a baby on every continent except Antarctica, but only because they do not allow pregnant women there. She jokingly said, she would not go there unless she snuck a pregnant woman in.

Consoli has traveled internationally to places including: Uganda, Belize, Guam, China and Barrow Alaska working amongst the population and training up practitioners and midwives on how to successfully do a caesarean section, building Pap smear programs and decreasing maternal mortality rates. She said her admiration for the doctors and nurses grew as she watched them work 15-to-16-hour days, with smiles on their faces, as they saved lives and brought lives into the world.

Answering the call

Consoli said she was pleased with how well her career lined up to the dream she had as a fourth grader. However, there was still one missing ingredient, a destination that would put the icing on the birthing cake: South Sudan. Consoli said she has wanted to live in South Sudan since she was very young. So when she got the call from the Catholic Medical Mission Board saying they needed an OB-GYN to run their Safe Motherhood program, the only thing she could say was, "yes."

"I was the only physician for hundreds of thousands of people, except for a practitioner from Uganda, who took care of HIV adults," said Consoli. "For seven months we heard rumors that the national security (called the N security) was coming to patrol the streets. Soon everyone



Courtesy photo by Rachel Consoli, OB-GYN at Brian D. Allgood Army Community Hospital
Dr. Rachel Consoli (third from the right) poses with her South Sudan medical team days after their capture and release from a civil unrest war in the country Dec. 11, 2016.

started to assume the rumors were just that: rumors spread to keep kids from misbehaving and men from getting drunk and unruly."

One-day when Consoli was in her clinic working with pregnant women, she went into a room to retrieve a blood pressure cuff and when she came out everyone had disappeared.

"How did 50 pregnant women escape so fast?" a baffled Consoli asked.

She looked around the room still unable to find her patients, then she saw her midwife run towards her mouthing, "hey, hey doctor," and signaling for her to get down. As the midwife got closer, Consoli heard her say, "the n security is for real." Consoli said she heard "boom, boom" and shortly after "ping ping," like bombs were going off and shots were being fired.

Consoli couldn't believe the attack was happening. The frightened midwife asked if there was a place to go because the Soldiers were fighting inside of their compound. As if saved by grace, Consoli remembered the Catholic priest had invited them in any emergency to hide with them. Taking the priest's lead, the women followed him to the bush. There were people running all in a panic and the women ended up between bushes hiding under a tarp as they waited for help to arrive. For two weeks they hid, and during that time a little boy snuck out from under the tarp and brought back mangoes and bananas so the women wouldn't starve.

When the tarp was finally lifted, the sun shone through, revealing United Nations workers coming to the rescue. Everyone put on a bullet-proof vest, loaded into a tank, and were taken to another, safer, village greeted by nuns.

"The nuns said, 'come work with us doctor and we'll take care of you,'" said Consoli.

Grateful for the haven, Consoli stayed and worked with the nuns. In the weeks

she was there, Consoli stayed inside the convent working. The one day she decided it was time to go out and stretch her legs.

It was after church one Sunday when Consoli stepped out to stretch her legs on the street of South Sudan. She took a deep breath and placed one foot outside of the convent. Her feet, with minds of their own, led her to the bridge. Before she could take a step, an 18-year-old boy appeared in front of her.

"You cannot go any further," he said. "You're a spy."

The bridge was forbidden territory but lacked any signage. She tried to explain she was a doctor. When that didn't work, she said he was not an officer and had no authority to detain her. As she turned around to go back to the village, saw the boy reach behind the tree. Her body froze and, as if in slow motion, he pulled out a machine gun and pointed it straight at her head.

"Now you stop," said the rebel boy. The boy was a member of the Arrow Boys. The Arrow Boys were an ad-hoc militia group put together as self-defense against another violent group of militants, the Lord's Resistance Army. Their name derived from their weapon of choice - arrows dipped in poison.

With every intention of staying alive, Consoli did what was requested of her. A man with a motorcycle approached and she was told to get on the back of the bike. Unwillingly, she threw her leg over and sat down on the seat. Forty-five minutes transformed the land as they headed toward the Congo jungle. She'd heard stories of women being taken to the Congo and raped and the uncontrollable beating of her heart pulsed under her fingertips.

The motorcycle reached its destination, the Rebel Boys' compound, and Consoli said she noticed there were about 75 men, and no women present. The male to female ratio made her even more unsure

of what her outcome would be.

Darkness began to fall and Consoli tried to find ways to escape and get back to the convent. She told them about how she saved the life of their leader's pregnant wife.

"I took care of the leader of the Arrow Boys," pleaded Consoli. "I took care of his wife when the baby was dying. I did a c-section. Now, she and her baby are alive."

"They didn't know what to do with me saving the life of the wife of their leader," she said.

One of the Arrow Boys finally relented and let her call the bishop of the dioceses who proceeded to tell the rebels that she was a nun and an American, so she was not to be touched. Consoli played along and mentioned the members of the embassy would be wondering where she was if she was not back by night. She was set free on a promise: she would ask the embassy leader to provide arms for the rebellion.

"The bishop paid for my release, I was worth \$200 dollars," laughed Consoli. "I was there a whole 12 hours and it was so stressful. When I look back on it now, it seems like a dream."

Later she met with one of the U.S. embassy staff at a hotel and made sure she kept her promise to ask for arms. She said he responded with a wink and said, "duly noted." Even with the incident Consoli said she would return to South Sudan because she loves it there and the women fill her heart with much joy.

Never stop dreaming

Today Consoli serves at Camp Humphreys as an OB-GYN at BDAACH on a three-year contract with the Defense Health Agency. The opportunity was presented to her when she applied to "Heroes to our Heroes" in the Journal of American Medical Association. She was offered Germany, Italy, Japan and South Korea and chose Korea because her sister works at Osan Air Base. This is the first time for her to work with service members and she is excited.

Consoli's fourth-grade dream became her reality and because she kept her eyes on being a servant to others, doors have swung wide open for her to continue to heal on a global scale. She can still be found delivering babies, this time for Soldiers, spouses and civilians, and

she can still be found wearing a smile on her face as she does it.

"Go into the world and have courage," said Consoli. "Be kind to each other and fulfill your dreams. If you have a dream to do something, then work hard to bring it to fruition. At the end of the day when you are fulfilled as a human being everything else makes sense. Be open minded because you never know what the next person is going through in their life. It is my privilege and honor to be here with the military families. I am not a hero, but I do believe I have had the opportunity to serve and work alongside some. I love you all so much."

Unprecedented trauma course hosted at LRMC

By Marcy Sanchez

Landstuhl Regional Medical Center

A first-of-its-kind training at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center occurred as staff participated in the Advanced Surgical Skills for Exposure in Trauma (ASSET+) course, the first iteration of the course ever hosted at LRMC, Feb. 23-24.

The course establishes combat training competencies and coordinates training to develop and sustain Department of Defense trauma surgeons located in operational environments, military treatment facilities, or at Level I trauma treatment facilities. With a focus trauma response, U.S. Army, Air Force, and civilian surgeons from LRMC trained alongside international surgical staff from Germany and Hungary.

“It is a course developed by the American College of Surgeons that focuses on advanced surgical exposure in trauma,” explained U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Mary Stuever, a general surgeon and trauma medical director at LRMC. “The goal of the course is to have surgeons focus on vascular exposure to control hemorrhage and traumatic injury.”

According to the American College of Surgeons, the organization responsible for verifying trauma center capabilities in the U.S., the course has three learning objectives for surgeons: Demonstrate key anatomical exposures for the care of injured and acutely ill surgical patients; Show the technical ability to expose important structures that may require acute surgical intervention to save life or limb; and Gain confidence in performing anatomic exposures independently.

The unique iteration of the course at LRMC is not only distinct due to international participants in the course but also being the first time LRMC staff have affiliated medical education use of non-U.S. Citizen cadavers with host nation partners. Additionally, the diverse expertise of international course advisors helped expand training objectives and approaches to medical assessments.

“You’ve got experienced instructors who’ve done a lot of trauma care, whether it was during wartime through conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan or whether they were at civilian institutions with a high volume of traumatic injuries,” explains Stuever. “The course offers faculty from all over the world, we have a faculty member from the Netherlands, the faculty member from Estonia, as well as faculty member from Germany who did most of his trauma training in South Africa. Trauma care throughout the world is becoming increasingly interoperable, I think the United States has really led the way in trauma care and developing a certain (medical) language so that when you work with other surgeons, you’re speaking the same language.”

“We’re sharing our experiences from military deployments as well as from abroad. The German military has a training program in Johannesburg, South Africa. We send military surgeons to get exposure to penetrating injury, which rarely happens in Central Europe,” said German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) Lt. Col. Thorsten Hauer, a general surgeon at the Bundeswehr Hospital, Berlin, and medical advisor at the course. “In combat zones (surgeons treat) a lot of penetrating injuries such as gunshot wounds and blast injuries. We have little exposure to this, which is why we need to share our experiences to have a common understanding how to surgically treat injuries.”

Although a U.S.-led effort, the training also invited foreign surgical staff to diversify experiences not only from advisors, but within surgical teams themselves.

“This is a very intense kind of training method because (students) have a very experienced trauma surgeon on one and one training situation, (students) get a specific task beforehand, you get it explained a little, get some information and then jump into it,” said Bundeswehr Lt. Col. Jan Frech, a general surgeon at the Bundeswehr Central Hospital, Koblenz, and participant in the ASSET+ course. “I’ve been on mission with American Soldiers, with Dutch soldiers, and NATO soldiers all over. We all speak the same (foreign) language in our basic training, every surgeon, every medical (personnel) will speak the same language concerning basic treatments but here, the course is in English. The medical (procedures) are challenging but doing it in a different language is a very important (capability) because if (surgeons) are working in a multinational environment and (surgeons) are not perfect in the language you’ll get problems.”

“(The training) is critical to maintain (surgical) ability to operate on traumatic patients because overnight this hospital could transform back to a level I trauma center upon any kind of event that would happen throughout this side of the world, whether it be a natural disaster or wartime conflict,” said Stuever. “Not only does the training help with technique and (identifying ailments) but readiness.”

Photos by Marcy Sanchez
Landstuhl Regional Medical Center staff participate in the Advanced Surgical Skills for Exposure in Trauma (ASSET+) course, the first iteration of the course ever hosted at LRMC, Feb. 23-24. The course establishes combat training competencies and coordinates training to develop and sustain Department of Defense trauma surgeons located in operational environments, military treatment facilities, or at Level I trauma treatment facilities.



BAMC Interventional Radiology offers a less invasive option for disc degeneration patients



DoD photo by Jason W. Edwards

U.S. Air Force Maj. (Dr.) Matthew Taon, interventional radiologist, demonstrates a minimally invasive image guided procedure at Brooke Army Medical Center, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, March 2. The new, less invasive option for some patients who have disc degeneration centers on a non-surgical, injectable allograft that uses allogeneic tissue and disc material to repair degenerative discs.

Mental Health



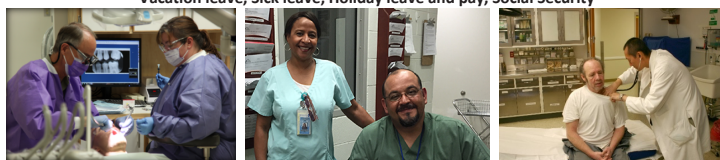
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By Lori Newman

Brooke Army Medical Center Public Affairs

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas (March 9, 2023) -- Brooke Army Medical Center Interventional Radiology offers a new, less invasive option for some patients who have disc degeneration.

"Interventional Radiology performs minimally invasive image guided procedures, also known as pinhole surgery," explained Air Force Maj. (Dr.) Matthew Taon, interventional radiologist. "The technology we use for this procedure centers on a non-surgical, injectable allograft that uses allogeneic tissue and disc material to repair degenerative discs."

Army Sgt. 1st Class Mitchell Alwin, an X-ray technician assigned to the 264th Medical Battalion on Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, was the first patient to receive the procedure at BAMC.

Taon used tiny needles to get into the disc, as well as live X-ray (fluoroscopy) and 3-dimensional imaging (cone beam computed tomography) to visualize the entire process. This procedure is intended to rehydrate damaged/dehydrated intervertebral discs and can provide pain relief for months to years.

Alwin was thankful that this new procedure was available to him, and that it provided him relief from his constant pain.

"My pain was a constant 7 or 8," Alwin said. "It affected everything daily no matter what I did - sitting or standing, I felt tingling and numbness down the legs. I couldn't sleep, that's really what made it worse."

He said after the procedure he experienced a little tenderness in the area for a couple of days, but he felt great afterward.

"To get three- or four-months relief was way better than anything else," Alwin said. "The lower risk was definitely worth the reward."

"Dr. Taon is phenomenal, not only is

he knowledgeable, but he's also great at what he does," Alwin added. "When he told me it was a newer procedure, I said, 'Let's do it. You have my full trust and confidence.'"

Beneficiaries need a referral to Interventional Radiology from their primary care manager for an assessment to see if they are a good candidate for this procedure.

"The ideal candidate for this procedure is someone whose disc is damaged but there is still some disc tissue that can be rehydrated," Taon said. "If the disc is completely destroyed and there is nothing to rehydrate, it's too late. We need to assess all possible avenues to see if this procedure is the correct one. Sometimes there are multiple issues causing the pain. If that's the case, we attack it one step at a time."

BAMC Interventional Radiology manages disease processes and performs procedures from head to toe, including stroke thrombectomies to remove blood clots from the brain, oncologic tumor ablations and embolization, uterine fibroid embolization, arteriovenous malformation treatments, hemodialysis vascular access procedures, and interventional pain treatments.

Interventional Radiology is also an integral component of ensuring BAMC's Level I trauma accreditation.

"We perform life-saving procedures such as hemorrhage-stopping embolization, revascularization, and pulmonary thrombectomy to remove clots from the lungs, to name a few," Taon explained.

"The minimally invasive innovations Maj. (Dr.) Matthew Taon and the BAMC Interventional Radiology team perform are just another example of the cutting-edge medical capabilities of the San Antonio Market," said Army Col. (Dr.) Michael Wirt, Department of Radiology chief. "This intervention greatly contributes to returning our Soldiers and Airmen to the fight, improving our Service Member's readiness and ability to serve our Nation anytime and anywhere we are called."

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Help Wanted

Mental Health

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Crownpoint Healthcare Facility is a thriving hospital in the desert of New Mexico; and part of the Indian Health Service. Our facility offers Emergency, Urgent, OB and general inpatient and outpatient services. We are looking for nurses that are adventurous, talented, and gentle and want to give culturally sensitive care.

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Physician



PHYSICIAN - FAMILY MEDICINE

Vista Community Clinic is a nonprofit organization located in San Diego, Riverside and Orange Counties working to advance community health and hope by providing access to premier health services and education for those who need it most.

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Physician



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Penn State Health is fundamentally committed to the diversity of our faculty and staff. We believe diversity is unapologetically expressing itself through every person's perspectives and lived experiences. We are an equal opportunity and affirmative action employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, marital status, national or ethnic origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, veteran status, and family medical or genetic information.

