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Rosaries are memories

By Airman 1st Class Kaitlyn Brewer
20th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

SHAW AIR FORCE BASE, S.C. — In a hot, dark room with all the windows sealed inside a rickety building in Belize, an optometrist sweats and struggles to move around in a sticky Airman Battle Uniform as he performs eye exams on local citizens in an effort to tend to as many people as possible within two and half weeks.

Over the course of his Air Force career, Maj. Ronny Bowman, 20th Aerospace Medical Dental Squadron optometry flight commander, has performed two and a half week humanitarian missions in Peru, Belize, Tonga, Alaska and the Philippines.

After every mission there was a lingering taste of sadness in realizing these people might never see a doctor again, Bowman stated.

Bowman, a tall thin man with a wonky smile and calm blue eyes ran his long fingers over his collection of rosaries, which were bringing back memories of why he went on the missions.

“On any given day, we were seeing around 150-200 patients,” said Bowman. “We did not have any days off, as we were trying to get to as many patients as we could.”

Bowman expressed how intriguing it was to get out and see the types of medical care various areas of the world receive.

“There was one man who had gotten a fungal infection and lost an eye already,” said Bowman. “He was seeing us for his remaining eye, which also had a fungal infection. In Tonga there was absolutely no medicine for this man, so we had to get him to another country.”

Bowman said if it was not for their presence, some of these people would not be able to live the lives they do, as some jobs require eyesight. Even people with less severe cases found their life changed with their newfound eyesight.

“There were times, after a mission, I felt so saddened because I would see all these people in these situations; I would start thinking of different ways I could help this person, and then that person. It was just overwhelming,” said Bowman. “It honestly started taking a toll to where I would have to muster up the strength to go on another mission each time an opportunity arrived.”

Bowman said he had his rosaries to remind him of the gratitude of his patients and that he was making a difference.

“Walking out of church, in Alaska, the locals had these gifts of rosary beads for us,” Bowman

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(Photo Courtesy Fort Drum WTU)

Spc. Alexander Madera (left) and Sgt. 1st Class Michael Stone (right) strum away stress and anxiety while learning a new song in their guitar group at Fort Drum, New York, January 15, 2019.

Wounded Warriors at Fort Drum love the jam they're in

By MaryTherese Griffin
Warrior Care and Transition

ARLINGTON, VA. — Author Bryce Anderson once said, “I’ve found that no matter what life throws at me, music softens the blow.” Soldiers at the Warrior Transition Unit, Fort Drum, New York have had their share of challenges and are using music to help them on their road to recovery. Soldiers at the WTU have started a weekly guitar group that provides them with many positive aides to their recovery.

“[Music] helps with stress, plus the adjustment of being around other Soldiers in a more social environment. Playing guitar shows them that they can

accomplish anything if they put some time and effort into the goal,” says Sgt. 1st Class Michael Stone. The 10th Mountain Division Spectrum Manager came to the WTU after being diagnosed in 2017 with a genetic based form of cardiomyopathy, a disease of the heart muscle that makes it harder for your heart to pump blood to the rest of your body. Stone now has a defibrillator implanted into his side, but that doesn’t stop him from using music to work with his fellow wounded warriors.

“I think it can certainly help with anxiety about starting something new, or starting over; especially Soldiers of a more advanced age. You are never too

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old to start something new," said Stone.

According to Recreational Therapist Annalise Doyle, no experience is required to join the weekly guitar club, just determination to make music and heal.

"The guitar group is a chance for Soldiers to learn a new skill in a welcoming environment," Doyle said. "Our guitar group combines people who have been playing for years with people who have attempted to play over the years or have never picked up a guitar before."

Song ideas are welcome and all music genres are explored by the guitar group. Stone also encourages Soldiers attending the group to bring their patience and a sense of humor.

"Occasionally someone will drop a [guitar] pick into the body of the guitar, which is funny because we bring it up on a regular basis when it happens, and it happens to everyone. It is

particularly funny watching someone try to retrieve it," Stone said. "It can get frustrating though, but the environment is always supportive and almost everyone who plays has experienced

it at least once. This actually happened to me this last week and I've been playing for almost 30 years," he added.

The group meets every Tuesday at

the Soldier and Family Assistance Center and uses guitars donated by Soldiers who are leaving the group or they share one. Of course, there is always the option to bring your own.



(U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Kaitlyn Brewer) U.S. Air Force Maj. Ronny Bowman, 20th Aerospace Medical Dental Squadron optometry flight commander, poses for a portrait in his office at Shaw Air Force Base, S.C., Jan. 22, 2019. Bowman has been on five humanitarian missions with the Air Force, helping over 150 patients a day restore their vision.

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• Memories (Continued from front page)

said. "Every time I go on a mission with the Air Force, it is a little Catholic community."

Bowman continued on to say he ended up with rosary beads from every country, and hadn't realized it until he was in

Guatemala when a woman begged him to buy beads to feed her family for the next couple of weeks. It occurred to him he was getting rosary beads as a 'thank you' everywhere he went.

Ramona Bowman, Bowman's wife, said

once he started to realize the value in his rosaries, he started to keep them in a jewelry box as opposed to a nightstand drawer.

"When he returns from each mission, his spirits are high," said Ramona. "He always has many great stories of colleagues working together and many amazing stories of those they treat. He loves to see the smiles on their faces, knowing they are elated to be able to see."

Ramona said she believes her husband has made a difference in each place he has gone, but also in turn the missions made a difference in him.

"He always seems to come home more humble and focused," said Ramona. "The one thing that makes him happy and at peace is knowing he can help those in need."



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First of its kind procedure minimizes recovery, surgeries for some WBAMC patients

By Marcy Sanchez

William Beaumont Army Medical Center
Public Affairs Office

A first of its kind procedure at William Beaumont Army Medical Center may make it possible for some patients to minimize operations when dealing with Common Bile Duct (CBD) exploration, thanks to an innovative surgical team employing a recently approved Food and Drug Administration device to CBD exploration.

The device, an advanced digital endoscope which allows for three-dimensional visualization, was paired with a robotic-assisted minimally invasive surgical system to conduct the procedure, a first in medicine, according to the device manufacturer. This eliminated the need for multiple surgeries for a patient who had previously undergone gastric bypass surgery.

During a regular checkup, 52-year-old Milton Johnson discovered his bilirubin test were elevated, an indication of conditions such as jaundice, anemia or liver disease. After undergoing an ultrasound and an MRI, Johnson discovered his CBD was dilated and a polyp on his gallbladder which would need to be removed.

“(Johnson) had a gastric bypass several years ago, now presented with blockage of the CBD,” said Lt. Col. Eric Ahnfeldt, General Surgery Residency Program director and chief of Bariatric Surgery. “Usually that is evaluated with a scope (through) the stomach which then enters the intestines. Because he had a gastric bypass, that route was not available.”

According to Ahnfeldt, a stricture (blockage) of the CBD, the small tube in the gastrointestinal tract connecting the liver, gallbladder and pancreas to the small intestine, could possibly signify cancer or cholelithiasis, a condition where gallstones obstruct the CBD.

Normally, CBD exploration is performed by a gastroenterologist trained in a procedure known as endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP), which routes an endoscope through the digestive tract leading to the CBD. Johnson’s gastric bypass made normal ERCP procedures difficult due to the restructured anatomy.

While other options exist for patients seeking CBD exploration with a gastric bypass, a multidisciplinary team of specially-trained physicians would be required to complete such an operation. Due to limited resources, WBAMC surgeons opted to use the device, already designed to explore the CBD, along with the robotic-assisted minimally invasive surgical system, to gain access to Johnson’s CBD, without having to coordinate efforts with the multiple specialists traditionally required.

“You can do (ERCP), with patients

who have had gastric bypass by doing a laparoscopy-assisted surgery, (but we had) a dilemma. (WBAMC) has no ERCP-trained physicians, but we do have (laparoscopy) physicians,” said Ahnfeldt. “To perform the procedure you need very stable hands, there are a lot of structures we are dealing with which can cause a lot of damage. So we elected to use robotic-assisted technology, a very stable platform.”

In one operation, the surgical team paired the advanced digital endoscope with the robotic surgical system, along with a fluorescent dye specially designed for use with the robotic surgical system, to perform the exploration while removing Johnson’s gallbladder.

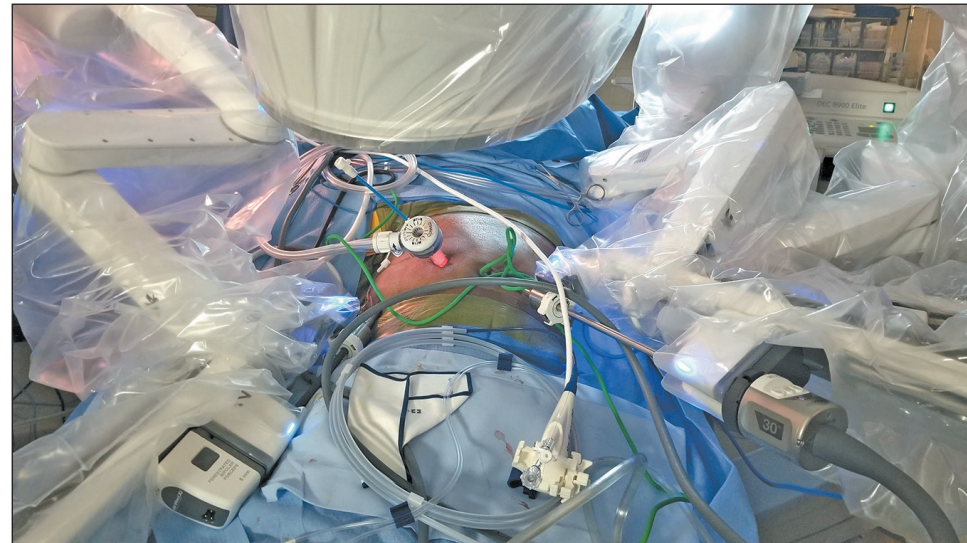
“We made four small incisions to take out the gallbladder, identify any areas of concern, and make a small incision on the cystic duct to pass the (advanced digital device) into the common bile duct,” said Ahnfeldt, who led the pioneering procedure.

The device, with a diameter slightly larger than three millimeters, made it possible to travel to the CBD and visualize the stricture in three dimensions, something not possible through traditional procedures which may only produce two-dimensional imagery. Furthermore, the one-time use device minimizes the risk of infection due to poorly sterilized tools, improving patient safety during the procedure.

“This is a real game changer for general surgeons across the country,” said Ahnfeldt. “For general surgeons to be able to rely on this technology is really going to change how the algorithm works for patients with cholelithiasis.”

For Johnson, a retired Army first sergeant who now teaches in El Paso, Texas, a biopsy taken through the innovative procedure proved the stricture was benign. Using the same device, surgeons were able to deploy a balloon catheter in the CBD to reopen the CBD.

“(The procedure) simplified the healing process for me and was one shot,” said Johnson. “Now I’m back to work



(Photo By Marcy Sanchez)

The first-ever Common Bile Duct (CBD) exploration using a robotic-assisted minimally-invasive surgical system and a recently-approved Food and Drug Administration device for CBD exploration was recently performed at William Beaumont Army Medical Center. The procedure, the first of its kind according to the one-of-a-kind device manufacturer, will minimize surgical procedures and recovery time for patients undergoing a CBD exploration and similar procedures.

and that’s huge for me.”

“The application of this will extend beyond just this particular operation which was a benign stricture of the common bile duct, to patients that come in with stones in their CBD that need gallbladder removed,” said Ahnfeldt. “(WBAMC) is no longer reliant on (an ERCP-trained) gastroenterologist. Just within the surgical department we can manage this whole entire process.

“It’s better for the patient because they only get one anesthetic, surgeons themselves are able to take care of the problem right then and there, and it gives you more information through visualization,” added Ahnfeldt.

Johnson credits the surgical team with keeping him informed and at ease about the new procedure throughout the process, while also relieving the stress on his family through open communication.

“The medical team here went the extra mile,” said Johnson. “It’s a great team here, the bariatric team has been wonderful, all of them.”

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Navy Medicine East leader receives 2018 Association of Military Surgeons of the United States Lifetime Achievement Award

By Petty Officer 2nd Class
Stephane Belcher
Navy Medicine East

Capt. Cynthia Gantt, chief operating officer, Tidewater Military Health System's Enhanced Multiservice Market Office, earned the 2018 Association of Military Surgeons of the United States Lifetime Achievement Award.

"I am thrilled and honored beyond words to have received this award," said Gantt. "I am so grateful for all the opportunities that I have been afforded during my entire career, and receiving the lifetime achievement award towards the end of my naval career was like a gift I never expected to receive."

Gantt was nominated for her distinguished career of consistent contributions to Navy Medicine, including advancing healthcare safety through her leadership, clinical achievements, and mentorship.

Gantt was commissioned as a lieutenant junior grade in the Navy Nurse Corps in 1990, and has since served Navy Medicine as a clinician, in health promotions, as an educator, and in command.

In the past year alone, Gantt served as the commanding officer of the NATO Role III Multinational Medical Unit, Kandahar, Afghanistan, where she led fellow Sailors to care for patients in trauma and casualty care clinics.

"Gantt has established herself as a leader in the military health system, as well as a lifetime advocate for patient safety, quality healthcare, and positive policy change throughout her long and celebrated career," said Rear Adm. Anne Swap, commander, Navy Medicine East.

Before volunteering in Kandahar, Gantt held several leadership positions including chief of staff at Navy Medicine East, supporting 20 military treatment facilities and Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center; commanding officer of Naval Hospital Lemoore; and executive officer at Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital, to name a few.

After commissioning, Gantt served as a family nurse practitioner and a primary care manager at three separate duty stations until 2000, when she decided to go back to school and earn her PhD at the University of San Diego. Upon graduation, she went to Naval Medical Center San Diego as the first department head of population health.

"Throughout her career, Gantt has distinguished herself not only as a highly trained and competent nurse, but also a strong mentor and teacher," said Swap. "She is an exceptional professional who is dedicated to quality healthcare, the cornerstone for Navy Medicine's mission of providing exemplary healthcare in any environment. I have personally observed her performance, and congratulate her on her lifetime of accomplishments."

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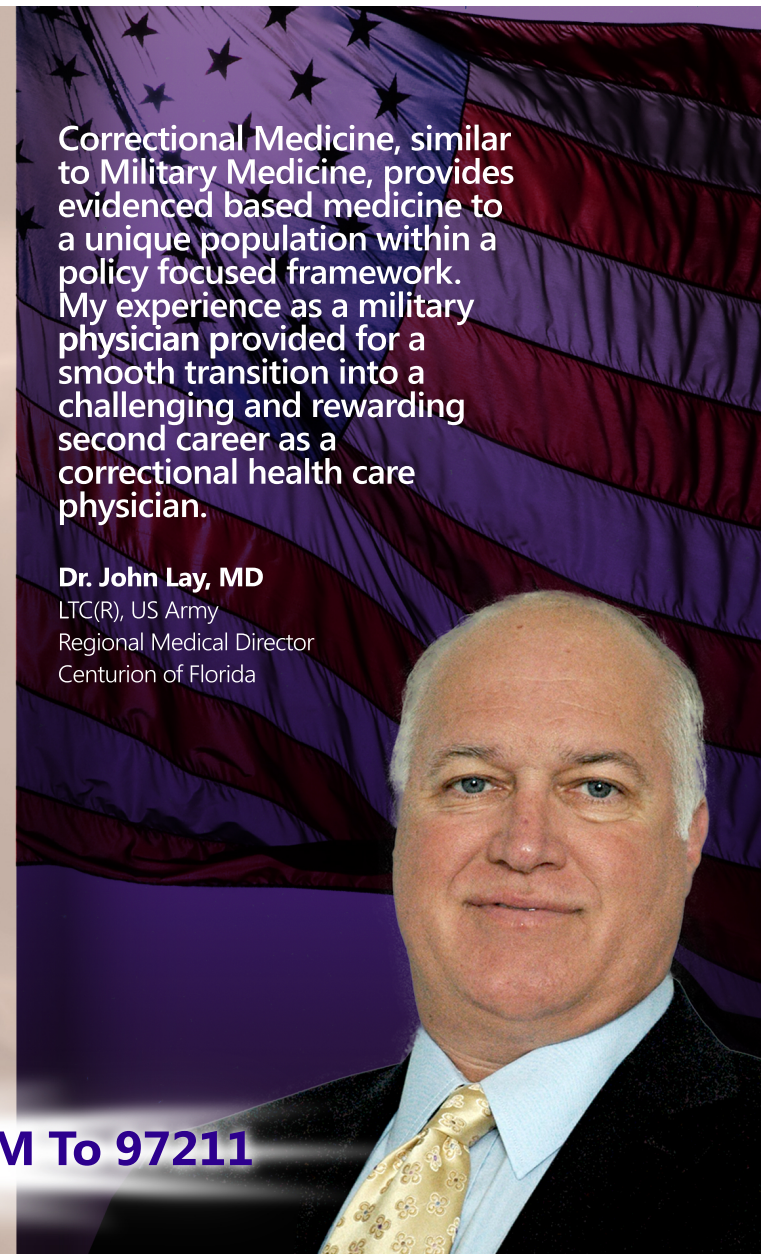
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