

# MEDICAL NEWS

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## Mental health is health

### Depression and oral health

Courtesy story  
Defense Health Agency

FALLS CHUCH, Va. – Depression is a serious health issue that can affect your emotional, physical, and social well-being. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 20% of adults in the United States have been diagnosed with depression.

One symptom of depression is loss of energy and motivation. This may mean that tasks like brushing your teeth or going to the dentist can feel impossible or even pointless. As a result, some people with depression may see a decline in their oral health.

#### How does depression affect oral health?

Depression can cause you to neglect your oral health if you aren't able to motivate yourself to do daily tasks like brushing your teeth and flossing. This neglect can cause gum disease, tooth decay, and tooth loss.

Depression can also cause you to seek out unhealthy habits that affect your oral health. Some examples of behaviors and symptoms that may affect your oral health include:

- Eating or drinking sugary or carb-heavy foods. These foods and drinks are major causes of cavities in teeth.
- Smoking, drinking alcohol, or using recreational drugs.
- Dental phobia. Many people with depression become anxious about the decline of their oral hygiene and are afraid to go to their regular dental appointments for routine cleanings.
- Dry mouth from anti-depressant medication. Dryness can increase cavity-causing bacteria in your mouth. Make sure you drink plenty of water to prevent this condition from affecting your teeth.

#### Managing your oral health

If depression is affecting your oral health, there are things you can do to help.

- Talk to your dentist. Let your dentist know if depression is affecting your ability to care for your teeth. Your dentist may have suggestions for you on how to keep on top of your oral health care routine.

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## Two different roads, one common destination for pair pharmacists



Courtesy story  
Naval Medical Center San Diego

Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS D) celebrated National Pharmacist Day on Jan. 12. They present two pharmacists whose parallel trajectory lead them to serving in one of the hospital's most relied upon departments by beneficiaries who expect a precision and expediency that leaves zero room for complacency.

"The path I took to get to NMCS D started with a yearning desire to serve our nation within the capacity of a medical profession," said Lt. Andre Burnett, NMCS D pharmacist. "Coming from a family with a deep-rooted connection to the military consisting of three generations, the celebrated expectation that my family had — and most importantly that I had for myself — was prescribed in the journey that has brought me to this coveted assignment at NMCS D."

Burnett, a native from Birmingham, Alabama, embarked on an extended journey to obtain his direct commission in the U.S. Navy — a total of seven years.

"Even before graduating from Hampton University's School of Pharmacy I was applying for a direct commission. The seven year wait did not detract me; however, I needed to sustain myself and became a pharmacist with Rite-Aid, where they provided me an exposure to a broad customer constituency — one

Photo by Marcelo Calero

Lt. Catherine Bobea (left), United States Public Health Service (USPHS) pharmacist serving at NMCS D and a native from Queens, New York City; and, Lt. Andre Burnett (right), NMCS D pharmacist and a native from Birmingham, Alabama, pose for an environmental photo in the pharmacy.

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## • Health (Continued from front page)

• Try to eat fruits and vegetables and drink fluoridated water. The fluoride in fluoridated water helps protect the outside surface of your teeth, called the enamel, which can prevent cavities from forming.

• Brush twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste, rinse with a fluoride mouthwash, and floss daily. It may be helpful to keep dental supplies in a few different places in your home. This way, your dental supplies will be easy to access, and you'll have multiple visual reminders to take care of your oral health.

Remember, depression isn't something you can simply snap yourself out of. It's a serious medical issue. Seek care and support from health care professionals, including dentists, and try to make daily tasks for taking care of your oral health as easy as possible.

### Getting dental care with TRICARE

Dental coverage is separate from TRICARE's health plan coverage. Your

dental coverage is based on who you are.

Active duty service members get their dental care at military dental clinics or through the Active Duty Dental Program.

Other beneficiary types may be eligible for dental coverage through the TRICARE Dental Program or the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program. Enrollment in these

*Air Force Senior Airman Hannah Heater, a dental technician with the 134th Medical Group, Tennessee Air National Guard, practices with a portable x-ray machine Jan. 6, 2024. Dental personnel help keep the force deployment-ready with routine exams and dental education.*

Photo by Master Sgt. Nancy Goldberger



programs is voluntary, as noted in the TRICARE Dental Options Fact Sheet.

### Getting mental health care with TRICARE

TRICARE health plans cover emergency and non-emergency mental health care. How you get mental health care depends on your beneficiary type and your health plan. Go to Mental Health Appointments to learn more.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org. This resource connects you with trained counselors who can help you get the help you need, 24/7.

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## Military Medical News

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## • Pharmacists (Continued from front page)

that showcased to me some of the most disenfranchised members imaginable. Therefore, compassionate caring in the execution of your duties was something that was integral to getting you through the day."

As Burnett was applying to colleges, he ultimately attended Stillman College, a Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) institution, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Lt. Catherine Bobea, United States Public Health Service (USPHS) pharmacist, was attending Queens College, a public college in the borough of Queens, New York City, and part of the City University of New York (CUNY) system. However, Bobea had no intentions of becoming a pharmacist.

"As a child I had aspirations of becoming a classically trained singer," says Bobea, a Queens native. "Despite attending the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College, it was my part time job at Rite-Aid that propelled me to the customer service aspect of healthcare. With the support of my Rite-Aid supervisors and the potential that they saw, I went back to school to obtain a B.A. in Biology. This step enabled me to attend pharmacy school."

During pharmacy school, Bobea was sent to the Crow Agency Indian Reservation in Montana, where she had her first exposure to the USPHS.

"Coming from Queens I thought I've seen it all, but it wasn't until serving at Crow Agency that the significance of the smallest acts of compassionate care became apparent to me. There is no such thing as too small of a caring act," expresses Bobea. "Once I made the connection of the Public Health Service with its mission and the public that they serve, it was a natural progression for me to want to become a Public Health Service servant."

With a unique collaboration between the USPHS and the Defense Health Agency through the former's Public Health Emergency Response Strike Team (PHERST), Bobea, and four other USPHS clinicians at NMCS D, provide a valued service to NMCS D by augmenting the command's ability to render patient care.

"Here at NMCS D I am able to uphold the Public Health Service's mission to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of the Nation," explains Bobea. "Being part of the PHERST team, we too must be ready to deploy within a moment's notice and for us that means being ready

within 24 hours. So I truly understand and value the demands placed on the fleet and our military medicine brethren."

The paths of these two pharmacists will ultimately diverge, but their commitment to serve will remain consistent.

"The connection forged between my fellow pharmacists and technicians is not just clinical, but rather it is rooted in a shared commitment to those who have dedicated themselves to the service of our nation," says Burnett. "For us, all roads lead to improving the lives and wellbeing of our Nation's heroes."

NMCS D continuously seeks professional civilian talent, not just limited to health care providers and administrative support. For anyone seeking a federal job, visit USAJobs at usajobs.gov - the Federal Government's official employment site.

The mission of NMCS D is to prepare service members to deploy in support of operational forces, deliver high quality health care services, and shape the future of military medicine through education, training, and research. NMCS D employs more than 6,000 active-duty military personnel, civilians and contractors in southern California to provide patients with world-class care anytime, anywhere.

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# Senior enlisted leaders convene at the summit

Story by Jose Rodriguez

U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO — FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas—Sergeants Major from across the Army Medicine enterprise convened at a four-day summit hosted by the U. S. Army Medical Center of Excellence on JBSA-Fort Sam Houston, Jan. 16-19. More than 170 chief medical noncommissioned officers, also known by their military occupational specialty as 68Z, discussed the U.S. Army's shift from brigade-centric warfare to large-scale combat operations, multi-domain operations, force modernization and how to shape the future roles of Army Medicine enlisted professionals to meet the Army's needs.

The senior enlisted representatives who attended the summit were from Army active-duty units, National Guard and Army Reserves. Participants received briefings on current Army Medicine operations, operational threats and contingencies, medical research, casualty management, force shaping and medical readiness. A wide spectrum of DOD and Army representatives spoke at the summit.

During his opening remarks Brig. Gen. Clinton Murray, commanding general MEDCoE, shared with the audience the purpose of the summit. "I'm going to talk about the why," said Murray. "We're changing how we [the Army] look on the battlefield; we're changing how we fight on the battlefield, and we, Army Medicine, have to lean into that—understanding that we're looking at the Army of 2030 and the Army of 2040. What we did in Iraq and Afghanistan does not, and will not, exist in a future space."

Operational forces require Army medical professionals to be prepared and capable of providing medical support

in large scale combat operations. These will include prolonged care, treating disease and non-battle injury patients, providing blood closer to the point of injury, sustaining advanced skill requirements outside of the institutional training environment, and integrating non-medical personnel into unit casualty response procedures.

"This is the first time we have brought our 68Z population together at this scale," said Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy J. Sprunger, command sergeant major of the U.S. Army Medical Command, in his opening comments. He highlighted the importance of representatives of having National Guard and Army Reservists attending the summit and encouraged the senior leaders exchange information.

"Have conversations all week, learn people's names, understand who they are," said Sprunger on the importance of developing relationships.

Sprunger also emphasized the important role of senior enlisted leaders in supporting junior enlisted Soldiers.

"Our enlisted Soldiers volunteered to do a job. We have to make sure they are empowered to do that job. If we have our enlisted soldiers integrated into their team as a trusted member that actually does health care our doctors can see more patients. Our soldiers will get the training that they deserve to be effective."

Along with the briefings and discussions, the sergeants major also had the opportunity to tour training facilities, speak with instructors, and visit with Soldiers attending medical advanced individual training. The candid dialogue with instructors from various medical professions, provided additional insight to how MEDCoE is continuing to modernize training platforms, ensuring the students who graduate from the vari-



Photo by Jose Rodriguez

**More than 170 chief medical noncommissioned officers, 68Z, attended the Army Medicine Sergeants Major summit held on JBSA-Fort Sam Houston, Texas, from Jan. 16-19. Senior enlisted representatives from active duty, reserves and National Guard meet to discuss the U.S. Army's shift from brigade-centric warfare to large-scale combat operations, multi-domain operations, and force modernization and the role of Army medicine enlisted professionals to better meet evolving role of Army Medicine within the Total Force.**

ous courses can provide the best care or services as soon as they report to their unit. The group also experienced medical training in a joint environment during classroom visits at the Medical Education and Training Campus. The tri-service campus, located on JBSA-Fort Sam Houston, has 48 medical programs in various medical specialties.

Bringing together 68Zs from across the Army, including the National Guard and Reserves, to meet face-to-face and interact was invaluable to supporting

the national military strategy. MEDCoE Command Sgt. Maj. Victor Laragione underscored the importance of the summit.

"This is our opportunity to come together, to grow together and to understand where Army Medicine is going," said Laragione. "We are the foundation of where Army Medicine starts—where we sustain and transform Army Medicine. It is important for us to develop what comes next so that our soldiers are best prepared on the battlefield."



Photo by Jose Rodriguez

**Ernest Barner, a public affairs specialist at the Borden Institute, provided attendees of the Army Medicine Sergeants Major summit with information about the many medical books published by his institute. Over 170 chief medical non-commissioned officers, 68Z, came together.**



Photo by Jose Rodriguez

**Command Sgt. Maj. Victor Laragione, U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence command sergeant major (at left), and Brig. Gen. Clinton Murray, commanding general of the U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence (at right), addresses attendees at the summit.**

# Army medic sharpens skills in sub-zero Norwegian weather

Story by Kirk Frady

Medical Readiness Command, Europe

Porsangmoen Camp, Norway – Sgt. Miles Atkins, a combat medic assigned to the U.S. Army Health Clinic Grafenwoehr, Germany, braved sub-zero temperatures while taking part in the NATO Cold Weather Combat Medic Instructor Course in Norway Nov. 28 to Dec. 13.

Atkins was among a group of several NATO participants taking part in the two-week long medical training event at the Cold Weather Operations Centre of Excellence in Porsangmoen Camp, Norway.

The rigorous medical instructor course provided participants the skills and knowledge required to prepare, plan, and execute medical operations in arctic winter temperatures of minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit or greater.

“I wanted to push my medical training and skills outside the environments I previously fought and trained in,” said Sgt. Atkins. “As a result of this training, I received lots of exposure to other NATO medical forces and their routines and practices. I now look forward to sharing the knowledge and lessons I learned from this training with my fellow Soldiers.”

Atkins and the other NATO participants were able to complete a total of 74 Individual Critical Tasks (ICTs) during the strenuous training. For U.S. Army combat medics, there are approximately 124 Individual Critical Tasks they must master to maintain their skills and efficiency.

“I am extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to experience formal instruction and hands-on training under such harsh weather conditions,” Atkins added. “I now feel confident that I can operate efficiently in the mountains, the desert, the jungle and the arctic, without compromising Soldier safety.”

The Cold Weather Combat Medic Instructor Course in Norway provides students with practical experience and knowledge on how to conduct their own medical operations and training in a cold weather climate.

“This training forced us to analyze our required supply levels, the terrain, medical evacuation procedures and associated timelines, rest and work cycles, the condition of our troops, and proficiency of our own skills,” said Atkins. “One of the major points driven home during the training had to do with prolonged field care. This is due to the slow nature of most physical actions and responses when operating in colder climates like Norway.”

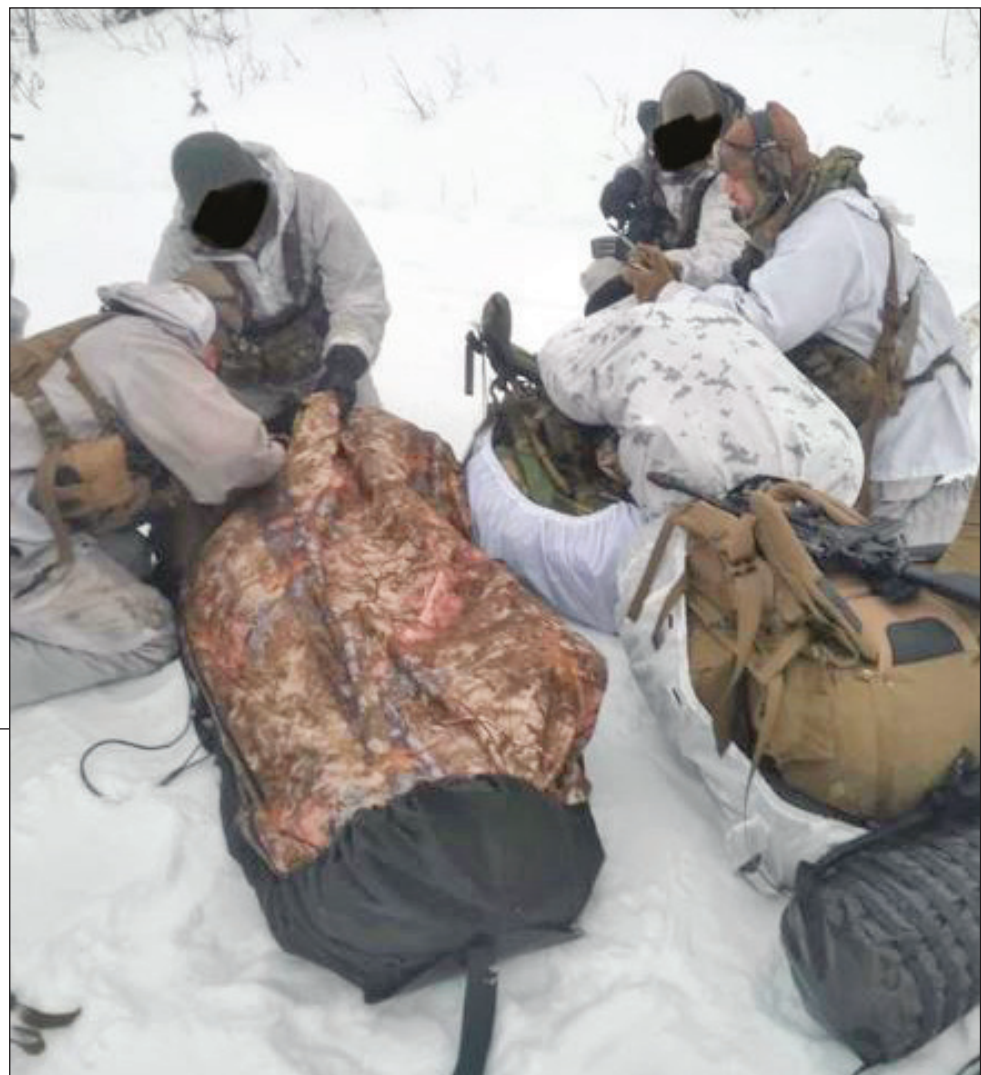
As part of the training, participants acquire knowledge and skills on utilizing Tactical Combat Casualty Care drills in winter conditions and learn how to

prevent, recognize, and treat cold weather injuries and adapt their own equipment to best function in cold a weather climate. The course emphasizes practical exercises and demonstrations including two field exercises with a total of 8 nights spent in a field environment.

As with any military training, critical lessons were learned by the those attending the training.

“One of the biggest lessons I learned from the training is to avoid overpacking,” Atkins added. “I carried way too much stuff. I also realized that you need to be physically fit. You must be prepared to move long distances on foot on short notice with all your equipment and to carry casualties over mountainous and snow-covered terrain. Overall, this was a tremendous learning opportunity, and I am thankful to have taken part. I would highly recommend it to any Soldier wanting to expand their skill sets and levels of proficiency.”

*Sgt. Miles Atkins, a combat medic assigned to the Grafenwoehr Army Health Clinic in Germany, took part in the NATO Cold Weather Combat Medic Instructor Course. Atkins was among 109 participants from 22 NATO countries taking part in the training at the Cold Weather Operations Centre of Excellence in Porsangmoen Camp, Norway recently. The course provided the skills and knowledge required to prepare, plan, and execute medical operations in an arctic environment with temperatures equal to, or greater than, minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Atkins was among a group of NATO medical personnel who spent 15 days in sub-zero temperatures acquiring knowledge and skills on utilizing Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC) drills in winter conditions, preventing, recognizing and treating cold weather injuries and adapting their own equipment to best function in cold a weather climate.*



*Atkins was among a group of NATO medical personnel who spent 15 days in sub-zero temperatures acquiring knowledge and skills on utilizing Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC) drills in winter conditions, preventing, recognizing and treating cold weather injuries and adapting their own equipment to best function in cold a weather climate.*

Photos by Sgt. Miles Atkins



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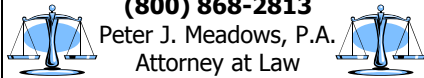
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# Guardisman becomes ANG Public Health NCO of the Year

Story by Tech. Sgt. Victoria Nelson  
157th Air Refueling Wing

The Public Health Office with the 157th Medical Group has seen its most challenging years in decades and one NCO lead the way in ensuring the health and well-being of the base population and the local community.

Tech. Sgt. Sarah Davidson, the NCO in charge of the Public Health Office with the 157th Air Refueling Wing, was selected as the 2023 Air National Guard Public Health NCO of the Year.

Davidson conducts inspections, implements preventive measures, and partners with health professionals to ensure the wellness of all Airmen assigned to Pease Air National Guard Base.

"I can't think of anyone more deserving of this award," said Lt. Col. Derek Brindisi, the Public Health Officer with the 157th MDG. "She is the greatest of professionals but more importantly an even greater human being."

Davidson's role requires a deep understanding of public health principles, effective communication skills, and the ability to collaborate with various departments and personnel.

"I work with the whole base during the health fair at the semi-annual block training," Davidson said. "But my involvement with each organization is more in-depth through the deployment medicine and occupational health programs."

In the past year Davidson acted as the medical intelligence officer, briefing over 180 country-specific public health threats and prevention methods. She also led a deployed public health pop-up clinic in Cherokee Nation, Oklahoma and managed the health education section for a population of over 450,000 people.

"The public health field requires a lot of one-on-one direct communication with supervisors and squadron commanders," said Brindisi. "Sarah handles these situations with ease. She is so approachable and compassionate. You can clearly notice that she only wants what's best for those around her."

Davidson began as a young Airman in public health and has steadily gained increasing responsibilities. In 2022, she managed the Wing's first Public Health Fair for over 400

See NCO OF YEAR, Page 6



U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Victoria Nelson

*Tech. Sgt. Sarah Davidson, the NCO in charge of the Public Health Office with the 157th Air Refueling Wing, poses for a portrait in the 157th Medical Group, Jan. 10, 2023 at Pease Air National Guard Base, New Hampshire. Davidson was selected as the 2023 Air National Guard Public Health NCO of the Year.*

## Physician



# PennState Health

Penn State Health is a multi-hospital health system serving patients and communities across 29 counties in central Pennsylvania. It employs more than 19,7000 people systemwide.

The system includes Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, Penn State Health Children's Hospital and Penn State Cancer Institute based in Hershey, Pa.; Penn State Health Hampden Medical Center in Enola, Pa.; Penn State Health Holy Spirit Medical Center in Camp Hill, Pa.; Penn State Health Lancaster Medical Center in Lancaster, Pa.; Penn State Health St. Joseph Medical Center in Reading, Pa.; Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute, a specialty provider of inpatient and outpatient behavioral health services, in Harrisburg, Pa.; and 2,450+ physicians and direct care providers at 225 outpatient practices. Additionally, the system jointly operates various healthcare providers, including Penn State Health Rehabilitation Hospital, Hershey Outpatient Surgery Center and Hershey Endoscopy Center.

To learn more about physician and APP job opportunities, please contact us.

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• **NCO of Year** (Continued from page 5)

members. In 2023, she conducted all food vendor evaluations for the Wing's Thunder Over NH Air Show, ensuring the health and safety of over 80,000 civilian attendees.

"Sarah came in with no experience in public health, but she had the motivation to learn what she didn't know," said Brindisi. "Now she is leading the next generation of public health techs. Spend time with her and you will experience a very gentle approach to educating and leading our junior enlisted."

In addition to preparing her team to be the best of the best, Davidson also lead by example. During the COVID-19 pandemic she was tasked with ensuring the base population was protected and lead a five-person COVID monitoring team for the entire New Hampshire National Guard.

"This function required her to be on call 24/7 for almost two years," explained Brindisi. "Providing recommendations for force protection and

acting swiftly on quarantining service members."

Davidson said she is humbled by the recognition and would be remiss not to acknowledge her team.

"I fully understand that this award reflects not only my efforts but the entire public health team," she said. "They are rockstars and have provided invaluable commitment and support this past year."

Brindisi said since he has known Davidson, she has exemplified outstanding leadership and a true passion for public safety.

"I love being able to have a tangible impact on the health and safety of our community," Davidson said. "But I truly love having the opportunity to work with so many organizations across the wing. Making connections is my favorite part and being on a team that promotes a culture of well-being and preventative care is the most rewarding."



Physician



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