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CRDAMC nurses 'escape' death

By Gloria Montgomery
Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center

FORT HOOD, TX — Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center nurses recently added a medical miracle to their resume by saving one of their own: A comatose Army nurse who had just returned to Earth from a mission to Jupiter.

Credit creative thinking and team collaboration with solving the mystery illness.

"We were like superheroes," said Alex Castolina after the 'ah ha' moment when her teammates from Urology revived their dying patient.

But first, said Castolina, a licensed vocational nurse, the team had to study the astronaut's mission journal that was full of cryptic clues detailing such things as a love for Skittles and how a piano had boosted the mission crew's morale.

No, it wasn't a scene from a science fiction movie, but rather an ingenious Escape Room challenge that baffled CRDAMC nurses during the weeklong celebration of National Nurses Week, held May 6-10 at the Fort Hood hospital.

"I'd give it a 9 out of 10 for awesomeness and a 10 out of 10 if we had won," joked Capt. Ashley Sequin, who participated in the team-bonding event with fellow staff members from the Mother Baby Unit.

Seven teams participated in the hospital's May 7 puzzle. In the scenario, the first nurse in space had obtained critical keys to curing cancers on Earth. Since she came back in a coma, she couldn't verbalize her condition. Her journals, however, provided important clues as to what occurred and what it would take to "cure" her.

"Teamwork. The cure was teamwork," said Lt. Col. Laurie Burnett, the creative brains behind the fictional Escape Room. "What better scenario than working together to do what we do best, which is save lives."

With a time limit of 30 minutes and scenario information limited to key words such as Ebola, coma, spores and cancer, the teams had to find eight clues within the journal to save the patient. Each clue corresponded to a silver metal disk that was in their operating area or on the patient.

There was a letter on each disk, accompanied by a number that represented numerical placement. There were two key legends in her journal that provided the necessary codes to decipher the key to her cure. To get the clues, participants had to read her journal together or the clues wouldn't make sense.

For example, the patient had detailed by color the specific amounts of Skittles she ate. When the clues are added, Burnett said, they spelled "Mo U Th" on the periodic table. This directed participants to the patient's mouth where they discovered a disk illustrated with the Braille letter K and the number 8.

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(U.S. Army Photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffery Sandstrum)

Airmen assigned to the 301st Medical Squadron, 301st Medical Group, Carswell Field, Naval Air Station, Fort Worth, Texas, and members from the Slovenian Armed Forces perform open surgery on a specially designed prosthetic in Maribor, Slovenia, during Immediate Response 2019, May 17, 2019. The SAF military member being treated is simulating an injury from an artificial improvised explosive device. The exercise is designed to improve readiness and interoperability among participating allied and partner nations. Participation in multinational exercises like Immediate Response enhances professional relationships and improves overall coordination with allies and partners during a crisis.

U.S. Air Force Reservists participate in multi-national mass casualty exercise

By Staff Sgt. Jeffery Sandstrum
Defense Media Activity -Europe Africa

U.S. Air Force Reserve medical personnel assigned to the 301st Fighter Wing, 301st Medical Squadron, out of Carswell Field, Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth, Texas; and the 433rd Medical Support Squadron out of San Antonio, Texas, were bombarded by simulated patients in a mass casualty scenario during Immediate Response 2019 (IR19), in Maribor, Slovenia, May 17, 2019.

Over 250 participants from the U.S., Slovenian and Macedonian militaries, and local civilian agencies par-

ticipated in the IR19 event which continues to increase participating nations' capacity to conduct a full spectrum of military operations.

For several days prior to the mass casualty exercise the U.S. service members trained with the Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF) by treating injured patients whose wounds simulated realistic combat injuries, such as burns and amputations. The two nations traded roles and worked side by side in each other's medical facilities, allowing both militaries the opportunity to build interoperability

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• **Escape** (Continued from front page)

“The Escape Room is a perfect example of working together,” said Col. Kimberly Geslak, deputy commander for Inpatient Services, who partnered with Col. Karin Nicholson, deputy commander for Medical Services. “I was able to take pieces of words and get the word, but she was really good at deciding how to find the clues.”

Because she was in a coma, team members at first focused on diagnosing her illness.

“We thought this was a disease process because we decided she was jaundiced and nauseated,” Geslak said, which directed her to the patient’s IV bag. “She needed infusion, so I looked around the IV bag and found a clue.”

Although Geslak had participated in other Escape Rooms, none were medically related.

“I thought it was very challenging,” she said, admitting that Colonel Nicholson was her “ace in the hole” because she knew how many black and white keys were on the piano. “If it had just been me, I would have quit early on. It just shows you can

accomplish more by working together as a team.”

The champion team, which included members Karen Rutledge, Nancy Blas, Jyateia Fault, Rebecca Bermudez, Danielle Fulkerson and Sgt. 1st Class Justyn Bearden, saved the patient in a record time of 16 minutes and 22 seconds.

Time was a problem for Seguin’s team as they nearly short-circuited their patient’s life.

“We only had a few seconds to spare,” said team member, Maj. Anne Daniele, chief, Maternal Child Health Unit.

Regardless, Daniele said it was still fun and built comradery and teamwork.

“It capitalized on our nursing strengths by forcing us to creatively think and collaborate as a team,” said Daniele. “This all enhances our problem-solving skills, which directly correlates to our nursing readiness.”

It also builds resilience, added Seguin, who is chief nurse for the Mother Baby Unit.

“Being in an environment where you are able to come together as a team improves your confidence and makes you feel good knowing you’re never alone,” she said.

Bennett, who is a nurse practitioner at Russell Collier Medical Home, monitored and graded the team.

“They were all impressive,” said Bennett, adding that everyone has a unique perspective of words, sounds and images. “It just proves that every person is vital to the success of patient outcomes. By taking the best of each of us and putting it together, it brings out the best outcome.”

Besides the Escape Room, CRDAMC nurses celebrated the week with various



(Photos By Gloria Montgomery)

Labreshawn Davis, a medical support assistant, and Vicky Dailey, a registered nurse, pour over a space reference book to learn about the planet Jupiter. Both are from the Urology Department and participated in Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center’s Escape Room challenge, held May 7 in honor of National Nurses Week.

activities, including a week-long 855-mile Walk Across Texas event that turned into a Walk Across the United States marathon when the 250 participants garnered 10,971 miles, enough steps to walk across the United States four times.

Additionally, CRDAMC’s nurses bestowed Nurse of the Year honors to Medic, Pvt. Michael Gell; Licensed Vocational Nurses, Kiki Williams (civilian) and Spec. Ryan Slusher (military); Advanced Practice, Maj. Teresa Timms; and Registered Nurses, Kendall Ruddock (civilian) and 2nd Lt Delany Fishman (military). Toko Armstrong was also recognized as the quarterly recipient for the DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses. All were recognized for their demonstrated excellence in nursing practice, impact to patients, professional growth, excep-

tional patient experience and contributions to morale and the work environment.

“We are a nursing team of 1,000 strong here at CRDAMC,” said Col. Jennifer Robison, chief nursing officer, about the makeup of the CRDAMC nursing team that ranges from medics and registered nurses to licensed vocational nurses and advanced nursing. “This inter-dependence and collaborative foundation is how we’re trained because it takes our whole team to provide care to our service members, our retirees and our family members.”

National Nurses Week is a seven-day celebration to raise awareness of the critical role nurses have in saving lives and improving health. It begins annually May 6 and ends May 12 on the birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing.



Working together, Urology Department team members inspect pill bottles looking for clues to save their patient during the challenge.

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• Exercise (Continued from front page)

and test the capabilities of each expeditionary medical services facility, health responsive team (EMEDS HRT).

Lt. Col. Eric Thompson, 301st MDS, 301st MDG, and an observer during the exercise described the importance of working with other nations, how they grew together as a team and how the training will benefit future deployments.

“The good part is having the Slovenians learn our processes, then us learning their processes,” said Thompson. “Having their ER nurses and techs working with our doctors taught us different ways to do our jobs.”

Before working with Slovenian military members, the U.S. medics began their training by building the EMEDS HRT facility to full operating capacity within 12 hours and treating over 40 patients during an internal exercise.

Col. Lawson Copley, commander of the 301st MDS, 301st MDG, Carswell Field, Naval Air Station, Fort Worth, Texas, emphasized how well prepared the citizen Airmen were even before arriving in Slovenia, because they work in the medical field as civilians and some treat patients like the ones they were treating during IR19.

“Several of us come from level one trauma centers where we work on injuries that are very similar to this,” said Copley. “In addition, our team took the extra effort and reviewed the joint trauma system clinical practice guidelines, which describe the types of war injuries that we might see in a combat or contingency situation.”

The overall objectives of IR19 are to build multinational, regional, and joint readiness; enhance mil-to-mil relationships; and improve interoperability. The working relationship between Slovenia and

the U.S. highlights those objectives.

“It’s important, it’s the point, to mix groups, mix teams together to interflow all the medical knowledge and also how to handle the mass casualty situation,” said Class XIV Andrag Strahovnik, Surgeon General, SAF.

Copley agreed and marveled at how well they were able to work together and test their capabilities with critical and non-critical patients.

“The exercise went very well, he said. “We exercised mixed teams and had a tremendous time working right alongside the Slovenians.”

There are approximately 6,000 participants from 15 nations participating in IR19. Participation in multinational exercises like IR19 enhances professional relationships and improves overall coordination with allies and partners during a crisis.

(U.S. Army Photo by Staff Sgt. Jeffery Sandstrum)

(Right) Airmen assigned to the 301st Medical Squadron, 301st Medical Group, Carswell Field, Naval Air Station, Fort Worth, Texas, stabilize a simulated neck injury on a patient with Slovenian Armed Forces in Maribor, Slovenia, during Immediate Response 2019, May 17, 2019. The patient’s simulated injury is from an artificial improvised explosive device and is one of many from a mass casualty scenario. The exercise is designed to improve readiness and interoperability among participating allied and partner nations. Participation in multinational exercises like Immediate Response enhances professional relationships and improves overall coordination with allies and partners during a crisis.



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Veterinary Clinic keeps animals on Whiteman AFB moving

By 2nd Lt. Michael Hardy
509th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

The mission at Whiteman Air Force Base requires us all to be ready to accomplish our mission around the world. That mission includes the four-legged furry members of the Team. The Veterinary Clinic is one of the many assets available to all who serve on base.

“We service all active members, Reserves, National Guard, Retirees, and it’s not necessary to live on base to use this clinic,” said Dr. Joanna Kuecker, a veterinarian at the Whiteman AFB Veterinary Clinic.

When asked about the biggest problem that the clinic faces, Dr. Kuecker explained that the people simply don’t know much about it.

The clinic offers many services including vaccines, preventatives, allergy treatments and ultrasounds. The clinic can also answer house calls if needed.

Dr. Kuecker said the vet clinic carries two medicines that can play a key role in keeping pets safe during spring and summer seasons. Bravecto is a tick prevention medication that lasts for three months and Cytopoint is an allergy relief medicine.

The clinic provides health certifi-

cates, which are an important part of taking animals to a new base and traveling overseas with them. The certificates prove pets are free of infectious diseases and are up to date on immunizations.

Additionally, the clinic also has a PCS brief for pet owners to answer any question they have. Staff Sgt. Juana Ponce, a vet tech at the clinic, describes the clinic as family friendly and supportive of PCSing overseas. Ponce explained that one of the clinic’s additional duties is to check the animal’s safety at other offices on base, such as the Youth Center that have animals and check the living conditions and health of the animals to ensure they are safe for kids to interact with.

The clinic also takes care of the dogs used by Security Forces to ensure they are fighting fit. “Providing medical care to the working dogs and making them ready to deploy is a good part of the job,” said Staff Sgt. Juana Ponce, a vet tech at the clinic, about working at the clinic. She said she feels like she is making a difference for all.

BRIEFS

The Whiteman Air Force Base clinic offers two important briefs for all air-

men here at Whiteman:

- **New comer’s brief:** This brief is a short introduction of our clinic and the services available to the service members. I also provide them with off base emergency clinic information, boarding facilities and groomers since we do not provide those services here.

- **Plan My Move Brief:** This brief is for out processing service members. I discuss basic information/ requirements for pets traveling overseas or within the US. We handle all paper work and guide the service member step by step to get the pets to their next duty station.

Both briefs are coordinated with the Airmen & Family Readiness Center. Contact them at 660-687-7132

DID YOU KNOW

- Open Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 3:30. Clinic closes at 3 pm on Fridays.

- Clinic is located at 900 Perimeter Road, Bldg. 1732 on Whiteman AFB. Phone number is 660-687-2667.

- The clinic has a new email! Contact them at usaf.whiteman.509-mdg.mbx.vet-clinic@mail.mil

- Clinic doesn’t offer surgeries or dental work.



(U.S. Air Force photo by 2nd Lt. Michael Hardy)

Dr. Joanna Kuecker, a veterinarian assigned to the Veterinary Clinic on Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, examines Goliath on April 29, 2019. Goliath moved with his family from Florida and came to the clinic to get a routine checkup, which included checking his eyes, teeth and heart. He also received bloodwork and a vaccination to update his health certificate, ensuring he is safe to travel with his family at any time.

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Dr. Clayton Ramsue, MD, Retired Lt. Col. US Air Force
Statewide Medical Director, Centurion of Mississippi

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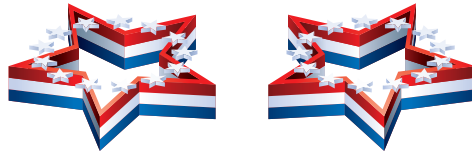


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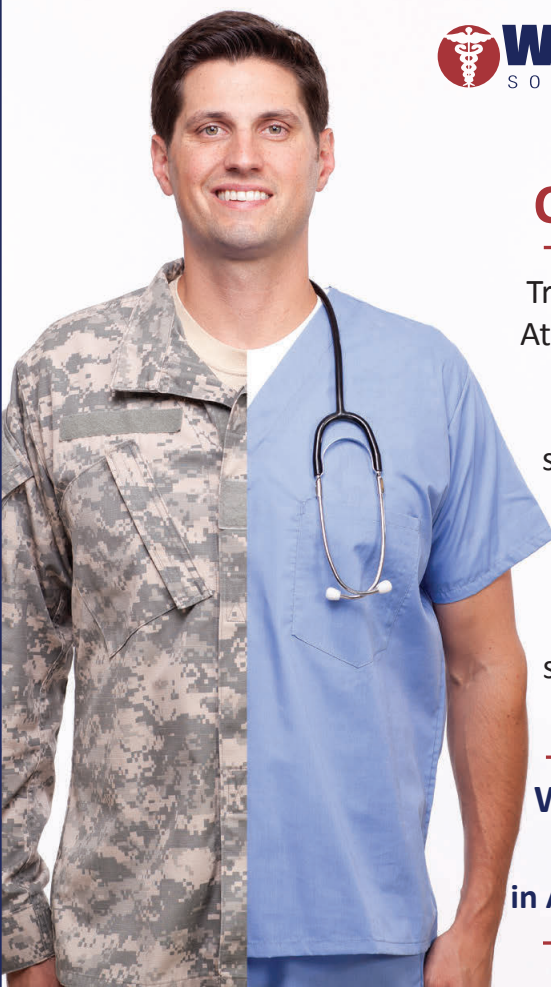
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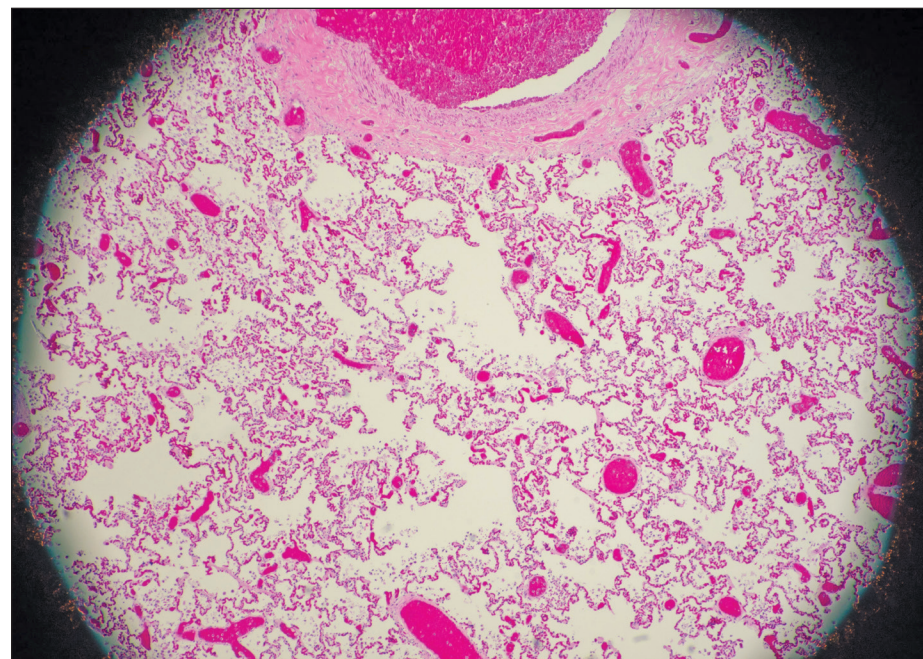
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(U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Nicole Leidholm)

Tissue is seen under a microscope June 7, 2019. Histology is the study of tissue and when it comes to determining the cause of death of an individual, looking at their tissue down to the cellular level is paramount.

Histology: Where art and science merge

By Staff Sgt. Nicole Leidholm
Armed Forces Medical Examiner System

DOVER AIR FORCE BASE, Del. – Histology is the study of tissue and when it comes to determining the cause of death of an individual, looking at their tissue down to the cellular level can be paramount.

This is the role of a histotechnician.

“My job is important because without me, cause of death may never be known,” said U.S. Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Tyler Wiedmeyer, Armed Forces Medical Examiner System histotechnician. “In cases where injury is not apparent, a histological viewpoint could help pinpoint the source of a heart attack or an aneurysm, for example.”

As the only histotechnician in the military working in forensics, it is Wiedmeyer’s job to ensure tissue samples are processed, cut and stained for diagnosis to help determine cause of death, for AFMES and 13 MEs around the world.

“Histology is the intersection of art and science,” said Wiedmeyer. “The different stains I can use highlight structures and certain cell types. It is really is quite beautiful to see the human body on the tissue level.”

Wiedmeyer uses a processor to infuse the tissue with wax, giving it structure, before making a thin slice.

“The microtome helps me cut at four microns, which is less than 1/20th the thickness of a sheet of paper,” said Wiedmeyer. “This allows me to have just one cell level, which is good for staining and viewing under a microscope.”

Without a histotechnician, tissue processing would take much longer to be completed.

According to Wiedmeyer, prior to his arrival, cassettes were shipped to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Maryland, taking up to six weeks for cases to be completed. Now they are accomplished in approximately one to three weeks.

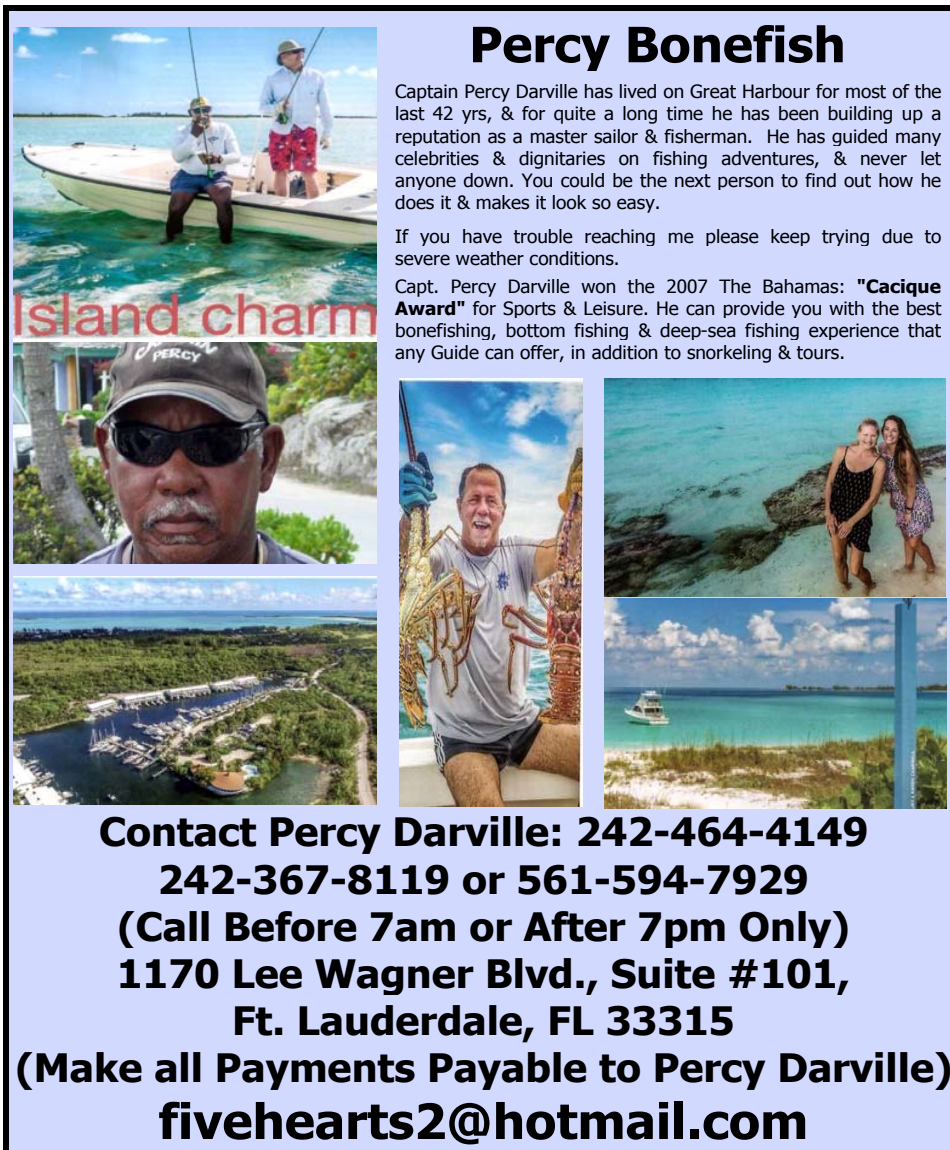
“Having such a competent and experienced histology technician like Wiedmeyer at AFMES is crucial to our work as medical examiners,” said Lt. Cmdr. Bryan Platt, AFMES forensic pathologist. “The diagnostic findings we look for on histology are often subtle and not typical of the work with which our (military treatment facility) pathology peers are experienced.”

Platt added how Wiedmeyer’s consistent high quality of work contributes to a complete and reliable forensic pathology investigations here.

Prior to joining the U.S. Navy, Wiedmeyer went to college for forensic biology. After learning about the career field and the role in forensics, he chose to enlist.

Following nine months of training in histology and four months of Corpsman School, Wiedmeyer started his career at WRNMMC, followed by AFMES.

“In the seven years I have been in the military, I have had the privilege to help behind the scenes with the diagnosis of cancer and other diseases allowing for a patient to get the treatment they need,” said Wiedmeyer. “At AFMES I am helping families get closure by providing details not seen with the naked eye. I am proud of what I do and has been a major part of me staying in the military.”



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