

MEDICAL NEWS

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A nursing story *Answering the call to serve, one patient at a time*

By James Black

Walter Reed National Military Medical Center

Growing up, U.S. Army Major Abigail Cooper played hard and excelled in many sports – but apparently never learned to tuck and roll, resulting in multiple injuries requiring stitches and the setting of broken bones.

“The thing I remember about the trips to the hospital are that I was never scared, but always intrigued,” recalled Cooper, amazed by how friendly and attentive the nurses were, despite her frequent visits. “After that, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in health care.”

Small town, big dreams

Cooper attributes much of her early success in life to attending Saint Francis University in Loretta, Pennsylvania. “It’s a smaller university, but their nursing school is highly regarded, and the smaller class sizes meant the professors had a vested interest in the success of each student,” reflected Cooper. Those professors kept her focused on her studies, despite her enthusiasm for competitive cheerleading and desire to pay down her tuition by working two jobs. “They pulled me aside to help me set my priorities straight,” Cooper emphasized.

Becoming more agile at managing her time and commitments paved the way for Cooper to excel during Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC), a century old college program offered at more than 1,700 colleges and universities across the United States – preparing young adults to become officers in the U.S. military.

Operation Enduring Freedom: Elevating enroute care in Afghanistan and beyond

At Cooper’s first duty station in Afghanistan, U.S. Army Cpt. April Ritter demanded personal and professional excellence, requiring nurses to lead by example to save the lives of America’s warfighters.

For Cooper and a new wave of Enroute Critical Care Nurses (ECCN), Operation Enduring Freedom changed the landscape, reimagining the way the way global combat damage-control surgery and evacuations were organized and executed. As a result, the Department of Defense’s medical community became more adept at managing assets for multi-surgeries along the continuum of care up

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Photo by James Black

Walter Reed’s Interventional Pulmonology team gears up for first Robotic Bronchoscopy within the Defense Health Agency. Retired U.S. Navy Capt. Robert F. Browning (first row, fourth from left) and U.S. Navy Capt. Sean McKay (first row, fifth from left).

Walter Reed National Military Medical Center performs first robotic bronchoscopy *Groundbreaking within the Defense Health Agency*

By James Black
Walter Reed National
Military Medical Center

BETHESDA, MD — Walter Reed performed the first robotic bronchoscopy procedure in the Defense Health Agency. Using the robotic bronchoscope to augment our current cutting edge cone beam CT Bronchoscopy program, Walter Reed now offers state of the art services in precision lung biopsy and early lung cancer diagnosis previously unavailable with-

in the DHA.

This synergistic combination of medical technologies offers DHA beneficiaries a capability available at only a few highly specialized centers around the world. In this first procedure, retired U.S. Navy Capt. (Dr.) Robert F. Browning, the medical director for Interventional Pulmonology at Walter Reed, and his long-time interventional pulmonologist partner U.S. Navy Capt. (Dr.) Sean McKay – in addition to a high-

ly talented team – adeptly combined these advanced technologies to reach and biopsy a very small peripheral nodule during a nuanced two-hour procedure – which fortunately detected cancer in the first patient to undergo the DHA procedure.

“This is so exciting that we have this new capability to provide to our patients in the Department of Defense,” emphasized Browning.

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to and including transportation all the way back to Walter Reed and Joint Base San Antonio, two of the best military hospitals in the world.

Walter Reed: A dream realized

After years of honing her craft on assignments in the Middle East and Europe, Cooper arrived at Walter Reed poised to share her energy and insight, overcoming a nursing staff shortage, and keeping morale high in the aftermath of COVID-19. She credits U.S. Army Col. Mike Belenky and U.S. Army Col. Wendy Woodall, the new director of for nursing services and chief nursing officer at Walter Reed, for

championing the needs of the nursing staff.

Cooper, who is Walter Reed's nursing service chief, understands the weight of expectations that come with working at the world's most revered military hospital. "My days are long, but my commitment runs deep," explained Cooper. On any given day, she oversees the morning change of shift huddle, conducts rounds to discuss plans of care for each patient, and attends a mix of administrative meetings.

"I've always enjoyed being immersed in the behind-the-scenes details that make a command successful," volunteered Cooper. Whether she's writing commendations or reviewing schedules, Cooper makes a point of checking in each day with the assistant service chief and the non-commissioned officer in charge to have a "touchpoint to discuss the next day's plan."

Maintaining physical and emotional resilience

For Cooper – and scores of health care professionals – finding personal happiness outside the military and nursing prevents emotional burnout. "I do the things that bring me joy – run with our dogs, do CrossFit three times a week, and go on dates with my fiancé," confided Cooper. The incurable romantic practices good habits to remain physically, mentally, and emotionally fit.

Maintaining a healthy work-life harmony empowers Cooper to think clearly, balance nursing staff and patient



Photo by James Black

U.S. Army Maj. Abigail Cooper, Nursing Service Chief, inside the Medical Care Intensive Unit at Walter Reed conducting early morning facilities check.

ratios while promoting a safe environment for staff and service members. Cooper's peers say she's successfully transitioned from bedside nursing to an administrative role mentoring Army, Navy, and Air Force nurses.

One of the highlights of her career was having her six-year-old niece pin

on her credentials during her promotion ceremony when she became a major. Cooper credits her success to her family, mentors and colleagues who have invested the time and energy to prepare her to lead. "Each day, I try to pay it forward to benefit our patients and my team."

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• Robotic (Continued from front page)

"They deserve the best and now we can give it to them."

According to the American Lung Association, over 1.5 million new pulmonary nodules are estimated to be detected every year in the United States. Although more than 90% will be ultimately benign, the malignant minority is predicted to cause 130,830 deaths in 2022 alone, making lung cancer the leading cause of cancer death for both men and women.

"With the growing use of annual low dose CT lung cancer screening and our nation's awareness of the risk that military exposures may be related to cancers (specified in the PACT Act), we are seeing more of these small lung nodules that may or may not be a cancer," stated Browning. "That's why a minimally invasive biopsy can prevent unnecessary lung surgeries and diagnose actual lung cancers very early – when they are still curable," explained

McKay, whose mother encouraged him to pursue a medical career before ultimately succumbing to cancer.

The addition of the robotic bronchoscope represents a patient-centered evolution, complementing the collaborative efforts of the Murtha Cancer Center and the Uniformed Services University in the fight against lung cancer.

Walter Reed, the world's premier, integrated military medical center and where the nation heals our heroes, strives to provide extraordinary experiences for patients, families, and staff while driving tomorrow's healthcare advances through education, innovation, and research. For additional information about Walter Reed, please visit us at walterreed.tricare.mil.

About Walter Reed National Military Medical Center

The Walter Reed National Military

Medical Center is one of the nation's largest and most renowned military medical centers. Recently dubbed "The Nation's Medical Center," we represent the joining of the "Best of the Best" in military medicine when National Naval Medical Center and Walter Reed Army Medical Center came together in September of 2011, to form Walter Reed National Military Medical Center as decreed by the Base Realignment and Closure law of 2005.

We are comprised of nearly 7,100 dedicated staff members who make it their daily mission to achieve the vision and mission of our medical center. Our vision is to serve military families and our nation's active duty, returning war heroes, veterans, and our Nation's leaders. We're committed to operational readiness, outstanding customer service, and world-class health care delivery for our beneficiaries.

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88th Medical Support Squadron targets 'trusted support, innovative solutions'

By Vince Little

88th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio – The 88th Medical Support Squadron stands as Wright-Patterson Medical Center's logistical, administrative and fiscal backbone.

With its mission to deliver "trusted support (and) innovative solutions" for medical providers, forge collaborative partnerships and build sustainable processes, 88 MDSS plays a key role in "dominating the dirty work" for the 88th Air Base Wing and 88th Medical Group.

"Patient care is always our focal point. Our responsibility is to ready our medical care professionals with all the tools needed to provide excellent health care for our patient population," said Master Sgt. Joshua Slaton, the squadron's Medical Logistics and Facilities Flight chief.

"We are the foundation of Wright-Patterson Medical Center, and in ironic fashion, we are located in the basement of the facility. As such, we stay out of the spotlight – for good reason. By working behind the scenes, we're able to provide our health care professionals with everything they need with little to no interruption in care. We do whatever it takes to provide the highest echelon of care to our warfighters and their families."

As 88 MDG's administrative arm, 88 MDSS keeps daily operations on course while resourcing the Air Force's second-largest hospital and focusing on how to improve the overall patient

experience.

Comprised of nearly 370 personnel, the squadron directs five flights: Medical Information Systems, Medical Logistics and Facilities, Resource Management Office and Commander's Support Staff, TRICARE Operations and Patient Administration, and Medical Readiness Office.

"When you talk about 'dirty work,' we are the ones down in the trenches ensuring that the hospital operates effectively and efficiently each day," said Lt. Col. Damian Pardue, 88 MDSS commander. "We exist to support the clinical side... Together, we support our warfighters, their family members and the nation's veterans."

Transformation and modernization

In early June, 88 MDSS oversaw implementation of MHS GENESIS, the military's new electronic health-record system, at Wright-Patterson Medical Center.

The squadron also manages execution of the hospital's \$132 million budget and \$90 million TRICARE program. It maintains \$36 million in war-reserve materiel, procures \$118 million in services and oversees \$148 million in equipment across the 944,000-square-foot hospital.

"We directly oversee the revenue cycle impacting the personnel and financial resources of the 88th Medical Group," said Jacob Arnst, the 88 MDSS Resource Management Office's deputy director, who's been at Wright-Patterson Medical



Air Force photo by Kenneth J. Stiles

U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Lafayette Ragsdale, Biomedical Equipment Technician, checks on an update to a piece of equipment in the Emergency Room at the Wright Patterson Medical center, OH, June 29. Medical Support Squadron was this month's pick for "Dominate the Dirty Work", a series of stories offering an in depth look at the hard working and dedicated individuals that often go unseen.

Center over three decades, arriving as an active-duty Airman in August 1992 before shifting to the civilian side 13 years later.

"Our staff determines funding availability to execute MDSS and MDG leadership requests supporting the delivery of health care. We identify opportunities to increase efficiency and reduce waste in a restrictive financial world."

Arnst and his team routinely engage in financial, staffing and personnel management at the base hospital, he said.

In addition to providing guidance and direction for the Resource Management Office and Commander's Support Staff Flight, they manage funding distribution for eight squadrons and 45 flights while identifying opportunities to improve the staffing posture of more than 2,000 personnel.

Everything starts with logistics

Among its various priorities, 88 MDSS directs logistics, information systems, resource utilization, readiness, patient administration and all personnel functions for 88 MDG's 2,200 staff members, as well as operations for over 67,000 eligible beneficiaries and 36,000 enrolled beneficiaries.

The Medical Logistics and Facilities Flight is the launching pad for it all.

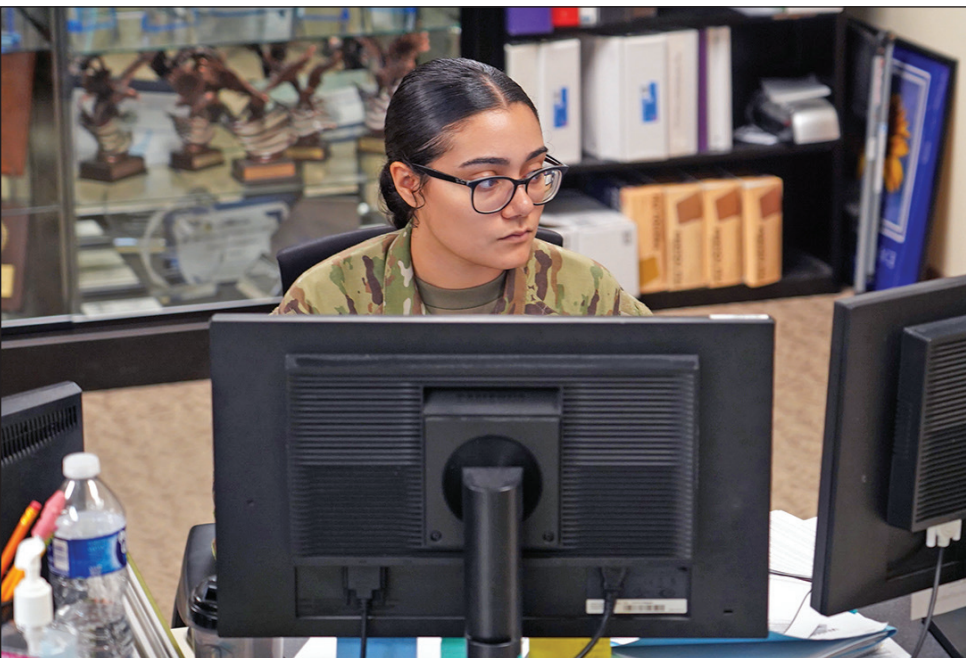
"Medical Logistics has a hand in everything that happens within the military treatment facility," said Maj. David Maley, the flight's commander. "We buy and maintain everything from tongue depressors to MRI machines while ensuring the doors patients walk in function properly and the floors are clean."

Slaton said the flight directly impacts the capabilities of every section, clinic and department at Wright-Patterson Medical Center. Its responsibilities include managing the "cradle-to-grave" process for all medical supplies, maintaining safe and operational capability of equipment, and ensuring the facility's overall structural integrity, he added.

In addition to home-station requirements, the Medical Logistics and Facilities Flight also maintains all of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base's deployable medical packages. That includes 140 war-reserve materiel cargo assemblages worth \$36 million.

Senior Airman Cannon McCool is among unit personnel who can be seen hauling tools around the hospital. He's served as a flight biomedical equipment technician the past three years.

"On a daily basis, I perform inspections, preventive maintenance,



Air Force photo by Kenneth J. Stiles

U.S. Air Force Airman Karissa Hernandez, Medical Materiel Technician, works the front desk checking logistic orders and requests at the Wright Patterson Medical center, OH, June 29. Medical Support Squadron was this month's pick for "Dominate the Dirty Work", a series of stories offering an in depth look at the hard working and dedicated individuals that often go unseen.

New York Army National Guard medics train in Brazil

By Capt. Stephanie Fernandez and Staff Sgt. Jonathan Pietrantonio
New York National Guard

FOZ DO IGUAZU, BRAZIL – Fifteen New York Army National Guard medics and physicians assistants took part in a South America's largest military humanitarian response exercise held in Brazil from Aug. 12 to 18.

The soldiers, from the Queensbury-based 466th Medical Company, Area Support joined 100 other foreign military personnel from 13 countries, and 1,700 Brazilians for Operation Parana III, conducted in Brazil's Parana State.

New York National Guard Maj. Shelly Respecki, the commander to the 466th, said that working with the Brazilian medical personnel was a great experience.

"We really enjoyed the opportunity to integrate into the Brazilian medical team and see how other countries really treat and care for their soldiers," Respecki said.

"The entire staff really took us all in and were open to a collaboration of sharing best practices, and techniques," she said.

"It gave us an opportunity to see what our strengths are and take a closer look at what we need to improve on and make better," Respecki added.

This is the first time that the United States Army has participated in the exercise since its inception in 2017.

The exercise simulated a catastrophic flood in the city of Santa Helena which triggered various humanitarian functions such as emergency medical treatment.

The 466th soldiers worked alongside the Brazilian Army medical personnel to open a role II field hospital. These hospitals provide advanced medical support such as advanced trauma management,

emergency treatment and surgical care.

New York National Guard 1st Lt. Justin Perez, a registered nurse, who works at the Stoney Brook Hospital intensive care unit in civilian life, said he learned a lot working in the field hospital.

"It was an incredible experience, just to be able to see how the Brazilians in a medical setting work and how much we were able to learn from them and vice versa," Perez said.

"We were each teaching each other classes and even though we had that language barrier, we were eventually able to build up the chemistry a lot quicker than expected to be able to work cohesively together," Perez said.

U.S. and Brazilian army medical personnel collaborated on emergency medical treatment outside the field hospital such as responding to mass casualties, medical evacuations, first aid and trauma care.

The 466th deployed to Kuwait in 2021 and 2022 in support of Army forces in the region, so some of the soldiers brought that experience with them.

The Americans also assisted their Brazilian counterparts in helicopter medical evacuation missions.

That was a great experience, according to Sgt. Brion Pasquale, a 466th combat medic and an emergency medical technician in civilian life.

The participating militaries—among which are part of the Conference of American Armies, an international military organization made up of Armies from the American continents, which hosts regular conferences and exercises.

The soldiers from the 466th were joined by two public affairs soldiers and a staff planner from the New York Army National Guard's 53rd Troop Command for the exercise.



U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Jonathan Pietrantonio

New York National Guard Sgt. Amanda Nelson, a healthcare sergeant assigned to the 466th Area Support Medical Company assists during emergency surgery alongside Brazilian Army peers during Operation Paraná III in various training areas in the State of Parana, Brazil, Aug. 15. The New York National Guard supported Operation Parana, a joint-simulated humanitarian aid response from Aug. 12-19, with more than 14 participating countries from the United States and Latin America, as part of the National Guard State Partnership Program.

Maj. Robert Freed, who has a master's degree in emergency management, was asked to serve as a planner in the exercise's joint operations center, where he managed a staff of five Brazilian officers.

Participating in this exercise "demonstrated the expeditionary capacity of U.S. National Guard units to successfully augment with foreign militaries during humanitarian emergencies abroad," Freed said.

Brazilian Army 2nd Lt., Jemy Chen, an army doctor, said he enjoyed working with the Americans.

"Working with the U.S. and sharing different techniques and equipment in these emergency situations was a positive experience that you can't get in our everyday training," Chen said.

"Being able to work through different problems despite the language barrier in extreme situations only make each of us more prepared for anything that comes up," he added.

Pasquale, worked with Chen, and said he was able to apply some of the techniques he's learned in his civilian job to the training exercise.

"It was fun to share some of my real-life experience into the exercise with my Brazilian counterparts. We had some issues with the stretcher going into the ambulance but were able to mix different techniques to find a way that we all felt comfortable with," Pasquale said.

"It was also fun to ride in an ambulance in a foreign country an experience that I'll never forget," he added.

The Americans, according to Brazilian

Army Major Luis Gustavo, said that the Americans integrated well with their Brazilian counterparts,

The Americans also approached the exercise more seriously than the Brazilians do, he said.

"They go deeper into detail. I've been to several exercises before, and this has been the best one," he said.

Work with the Americans and other international troops – which included soldiers from Mexico, Spain, and Columbia among many others – was also good for his soldiers, Gustavo said.

"My troops do not have the international experience, and most have never left Brazil. So, they have the opportunity to work with troops from another country, so that they feel more involved," Gustavo said.

The deployment wasn't all work.

After the exercise was completed, the Brazilian Army sponsored a trip for all the participants to visit the Iguazu Falls, one of the largest waterfall systems in the world and the Itaipu Dam, one of the largest hydroelectric dams in the world.

Perez was also able to teach and play different card games with other Brazilian soldiers.

"It was a good way to kind of build that bond together on our downtime so that when we do work in a type of an emergency environment, we already have that trust in each other," Perez said.

"Hopefully we'll have some exercises in the United States that we'll be able to host the Brazilians here in New York to work with us because it was it was great working together," he added.



U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Jonathan Pietrantonio

New York National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Frank Castillo and Sgt. Brion Pasquale, both combat medics assigned to the 466th Area Support Medical Company assists during emergency trauma care alongside Brazilian Army peers.

Medical teams participate in Steel Buckeye

By Stacy Vaughn

445th Airlift Wing, Public Affairs,
Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio

Approximately 65 Reserve Citizen Airmen from the 445th Aeromedical Evacuation and Aeromedical Staging Squadrons trained with their counterparts from the 911th Airlift Wing, Pittsburgh Air Reserve Station, Pennsylvania, at two locations during Steel Buckeye Aug. 2 and 3.

Two missions were conducted each day, one for each AE unit. One mission took off from Pittsburgh ARS with their AES onboard their wing's C-17 Globemaster III bound for Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. The other mission took off from Wright-Patt bound for Pittsburgh ARS with the 445th AES onboard a 445th C-17. Once at their location, the AES Airmen onboard the C-17 conducted patient movements with the ASTS Airmen assigned at that location. After the patients were loaded/unloaded, the C-17s flew back to their respective locations.

Maj. Darren DeCarlo, 911th ASTS special projects officer, said the idea for their unit to train with another wing on patient movements and run various scenarios with both AES and ASTS units came from Col. Steven Theohares, 911th ASTS commander, who was previously the 445th AES commander. Maj. Nathaniel Copen,

445th AES director of operations/flight nurse evaluator, said the 911th AES and 911th ASTS reached out to him about the idea of collaborating with them and both wings got the ball rolling. Copen said they started coordinating the event since spring, working out all the times for flights and how much ground time would be available for patient movement at each location.

"This was a great opportunity for our Airmen to work with another Reserve unit. We were asked if we'd like to conduct some aeromedical readiness missions and provide the 445th ASTS and 911th ASTS the opportunity to conduct ground operations with the patients from the 445th AES and the 911th AES," Copen said.

The 445th ASTS critical care air transport team (CCATT) and the 911th ASTS CCATT were also involved with the training, flying with their respective AE crews. When patients require extra attention, a CCATT of a critical care physician, critical care nurse and a respiratory therapist augment the AE crew to provide intensive care unit type attention during air transport.

Patient loads of 10-12 litters were moved from each location.

"The objectives we set out for the training were met. Any issues that came up we were able to work together to resolve. This event was also a



U.S. Air Force photo/Master Sgt. Patrick O'Reilly

Senior Master Sgt. Staut and Senior Airman Faith Schuster, 445th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron members, provide treatment to a patient in the recovery position, and check unregulated patient movement in low-light condition on a C-17 Globemaster III enroute to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio during joint exercise Steel Buckeye Aug. 2. Approximately 65 Reserve Citizen Airmen from the 445th Aeromedical Evacuation and Aeromedical Staging Squadrons trained with their counterparts from the 911th Airlift Wing, Pittsburgh Air Reserve Station, Pennsylvania, at two locations during Steel Buckeye Aug. 2 and 3.

great opportunity for both AES units to work with the CCATT, running and executing various scenarios together," DeCarlo said.

Capt. Shanice Jackson, 445th AES

flight nurse, said when they landed at Pittsburgh, the engines were still running as they initiated the transfer of patients on and off the aircraft in approximately 15 minutes before taking off again.

"It was a very quick process. We didn't have time to interact much with the 911th Airmen but it was a smooth process," Jackson said.

"Overall, this training will enhance the mission capabilities of each squadron and increase our overall readiness for future patient movements. This will continue to build upon the relationships we have with other AES and ASTS throughout the 4th Air Force," Copen said.

"I was very appreciative of the fact that I was able to work in a new environment and gain more experience in a leadership type role. My flight was patient with me and helped coach me along the way," said Senior Airman Olivia Pietras, 445th ASTS aerospace medical service technician.

Senior Airman Preston Sanders, 445th AES medical technician said the training provided real-world experience for her and her fellow Airmen.

"I hope we can do this again in the near future. The exercise, as a whole, prepared us for the real world. I'd like to see more of this type of training in the future," Sanders said.



U.S. Air Force photo/Master Sgt. Patrick O'Reilly

Senior Airman Katelyn Moenter, 445th Aeromedical Staging Squadron medical technician, assists members from the 911th Aeromedical Staging Squadron Pittsburgh Air Reserve Station, with securing a training mannequin onto a litter at Pittsburgh Air Reserve Station, Pennsylvania during joint exercise.



• Support (Continued from page 3)

calibrations and repair medical equipment,” he said. “This helps ensure the facility has properly functioning medical equipment to provide care to service members and beneficiaries.”

The Medical Logistics and Facilities Flight is highly “multifaceted,” featuring several components that touch a vast array of patient-care operations, Maley said.

The main three are medical materiel, the Medical Equipment Repair Center and facility management, which cross a wide spectrum of operations to include supply and equipment acquisition, warehousing, contract and life-cycle management, environmental services, preventive maintenance and repair.

Maley said these unique functions add up to a “safe, clean and stocked military treatment facility,” ensuring patients receive high-quality health care at WPAFB.

“The Medical Logistics Flight helps 88 MDSS ‘dominate the dirty work’ by working behind the scenes and buying everything our doctors, nurses and technicians need to serve our patient population,” he said. “We are the box kickers and the wrench-turners that make everything work within the facility. We typically work behind the scenes in a warehouse or in the basement of



Air Force photo by Kenneth J. Stiles
U.S. Airman 1st Class Jason Barcelon, Medical Materiel Technician, gathers boxes for a shipment in the warehouse.

the facility, but everything that touches a patient originates in this flight.”

Systems flight keeps hospital online

The Medical Information Systems Flight handles 88 MDSS “dirty work” by providing information technology equipment and support for all of Wright-Patterson Medical Center. It also works with Defense Health Agency to preserve network integrity



Air Force photo by Kenneth J. Stiles
Bill Young prepares equipment to be send out in the warehouse at the Wright Patterson Medical center, OH, June 29. Medical Support Squadron was this month's pick for “Dominate the Dirty Work”, a series of stories offering an in depth look at the hard working and dedicated individuals that often go unseen.

through implementation of security protocols and procedures.

“Our technicians are in the business of providing top-notch customer support,” said Maj. Kevin Underwood, the squadron’s Medical Information Systems Flight commander. “Sometimes, you can see them working in the warehouse receiving, inventorying and deploying equipment to the military treatment facility. Other times, you’ll see them crawling under desks on hands and knees plugging in equipment for our fellow MTF members.”

He said mission dependence on technology is hardly unique in this global high-tech age. But without the flight delivering reliable hardware and network connectivity on a daily basis, the hospital simply wouldn’t operate efficiently – for patients or personnel.

“Our flight’s focal point is maintaining operations,” Underwood said. “We don’t directly interact with patients; however, when we do our jobs, we are ensuring that our providers are able to take good care of service members and beneficiaries and our leadership can run the MTF effectively.”

For its efforts, the flight was selected as Air Force Materiel Command’s Medical Information Services Team of the Year for 2022.

‘Going to bat for our beneficiaries’

Away from the glare of clinics, patient waiting areas and treatment rooms, 88 MDSS medical equipment technicians such as Senior Airman Robin Claire Luna keep busy completing inventories, maintaining physical accountability, and updating any data necessary for efficient management and precise reporting of in-use equipment at the hospital.

She helps oversee 113 accounts tracking \$145 million in 88 MDG medical

equipment.

“I assist with procurement for all new equipment – as new replacement equipment comes in, the old one goes out,” said Luna, who’s been with the Medical Logistics and Facilities Flight at Wright-Patterson Medical Center since August 2021. “Furthermore, I purchase equipment-repair parts to ensure our biomedical equipment technicians can get medical equipment properly configured, serviceable and safe to use. ... This helps ensure that WPMC maintains a reliable and safe infrastructure, eventually enabling the provision of top-notch patient care.”

While most of the squadron’s flights are focused on supporting 88 MDG personnel, TRICARE Operations and Patient Administration, or TOPA, has a direct tie to patients and beneficiaries.

Among its responsibilities, the flight processes referrals, educates patients on TRICARE benefits and safeguards medical records.

“The focal point in TOPA is taking care of our patients,” said Lt. Col. Lisa Ashdown, flight commander. “We strive to provide the best customer service and make sure patients receive the tools they need in order to have a successful patient experience.”

Inevitably, things don’t always work seamlessly with TRICARE, she added.

That’s when TOPA’s beneficiary counselor and Referral Management Center step in to elevate claims issues to Humana Military, the program’s health insurance provider, and make sure patients do not have to pay for unnecessary bills.

“TOPA helps ‘dominate the dirty work’ at WPMC by going to bat for our beneficiaries,” Ashdown said. “Our job isn’t the most glamorous when it comes to the Medical Center, but we ensure patients can get the care they need when they need it.”

Physician



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Training in Germany starts cadets' path toward Army Nursing

By John Ciccarelli
Landstuhl Regional Medical Center

Seven Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) cadets recently participated in the Nurse Summer Training Program (NSTP) at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (LRMC), gaining hands-on experience in military medicine and the responsibilities of Army Nurse Corps officers.

The month-long program familiarizes future Army nurses with the complexities of military medicine. In approximately 120 hours of clinical nursing experience, cadets networked with current Army nurses and received one-on-one training and mentorship from LRMC's medical professionals.

The program is offered at U.S. Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) in the U.S. and overseas and is typically completed between the junior and senior years of college. The most recent cohort at LRMC included: Lucas Morris, South Dakota State University; Elizabeth Shirrell, Truman State University; Fiona Reckart, Kent State University; Jaiden Childs, Seattle University; Nathan Howard, University of Pittsburg; Marin Johnson, Clemson University; and Sadie Babka, University of Utah.

Each cadet works alongside a Registered Nurse, said 1st Lt. Shawna Mumma,

RN, BSN, a nurse at the LRMC Labor, Delivery, Recovery, Postpartum Unit who mentored the cadets.

"For most of the cadets, this is their first introduction to Army nursing," she said. "They get a glimpse of what they will do once commissioned and soak in all the new terminology, clinical environments, and create valuable connections with peers and leaders in all areas of military medicine. At LRMC, the cadets explore multiple units, follow our Air Force teammates at En-Route Patient Staging (ERPS), participate in Medical Trauma Team Training (MT3), and visit the 512th Field Hospital at Rhine Ordnance Barracks. The cadets receive a unique experience at LRMC due to our location."

Morris, from South Dakota State University, said working closely with a variety of nurses at LRMC allowed him to understand what it means to be an Army nurse.

"I found Medical Trauma Team Training the most exciting because it's medicine in the deployed setting," he said. "The challenges that come along with deployed medicine are really intriguing because you're working with a small team in an austere environment."

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Photo by John Ciccarelli

Army Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) cadets (from left) Cadet Elizabeth Shirrell, Cadet Lucas Morris and Cadet Fiona Reckart prepare a medical manikin for a video production to present during their final presentation as part of the Nurse Summer Training Program (NSTP), DATE. The month-long program aims to introduce future Army nurses, currently enrolled in an ROTC program, to military medicine and the roles and responsibilities of Army Nurse Corps officers.

Physician



PennState Health

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

pshdocs@pennstatehealth.psu.edu

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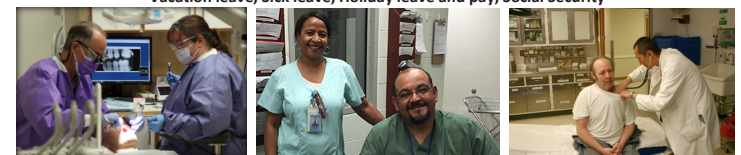


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• Training (Continued from page 7)

He said the NSTP reinforced his desire to work in an emergency room setting and deployed medicine.

"(NSTP) was unique because I've never had those kinds of experiences," he said. "I have a better idea of what to expect when I first hit the floor as a new Army nurse. LRMC was my top choice, and it's been a great experience getting to work throughout the entire hospital and experience some of Germany."

Shirrell, from Truman State University, said she also valued the ability to experience emergency care.

"Being able to see how everybody functioned as a team was very insightful to me," she said. "I've always been leaning toward emergency room, but this solidified it,

being able to work in one, because I hadn't yet. Being able to see that process and be a part of that quick in and out - trying to prioritize interventions and decide who's most important to see first - has really helped me get better at nursing."

Reckart, from Kent State University, said the NSTP opened her eyes to the possibilities available to her as an Army nurse.

"Experiencing the different routes, you can take as an Army nurse has been awesome," she said. "I've talked to people who have focused more on the clinical aspect, people who are focused more on the leadership aspect, and I've been able to see how you can do both. I also enjoyed being involved with improving quality and safety for patients."