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Teaming with Small Business to Improve Technology, Save Lives on Battlefield

By 59th Medical Wing Chief Scientist's Office, Science & Technology | Published Dec 4, 2024, Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, TX.

In the not-so-distant future, a U.S. medic may encounter an injured warfighter on a remote battlefield. Instead of drawing a liquid painkiller from a vial using a needle and syringe, they will pull a mini-autoinjector from their bag, activate, and immediately administer to their patient. The medic will be able to ease the warfighter's pain in seconds instead of agonizing minutes.

This vision for the future became more achievable with Air Force Research Laboratory's (AFRL) award of two contracts on behalf of the Air Force Medical Readiness Agency (AFMRA).

The contracts, awarded to a medical device innovator, will allow the small business to adapt their auto-injector technology for military applications. The auto-injectors are designed to deliver life-saving medications like epinephrine in a small, key-fob sized unit. With modification, they can be used to administer medications required on a battlefield such as ketamine, hydromorphone, or Tranexamic Acid. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval is required for military applications of this auto-injector, and these contracts serve as a critical step in fielding a safe and effective product for saving lives.

The 59th Medical Wing's Chief Scientist's Office (Science & Technology-S&T), AirForce Special Operations Command (AFSOC), and AFMRA teamed up to advocate for the military use of this disruptive, life-saving technology.

Beginning with the military's use of small disposable syrettes of morphine to treat wounded soldiers' pain on the battlefield, the military has sought better and safer means to provide care in austere conditions. One solution was an autoinjector that would enable medics to quickly provide predetermined doses of pain medication to wounded warfighters, usually under enemy fire and in austere locations. However, these autoinjectors were too big and bulky to carry downrange, and often resulted in accidental injections to medics.

Then, the 59th MDW was approached by a medical device innovator interested in co-developing their mini-autoinjectors.

"We saw a commercial technology that had the potential to save warfighters' lives on the battlefield, and dedicated ourselves to find out, and then make it happen," said Dr. Shelia Savell, 59th Medical Wing nurse scientist.

The S&T team consulted with AFSOC's Medical Modernization Division, who was interested in adapting the autoinjectors for their medics, and then worked with the medical device innovator to submit a proposal package to AFWERX's Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program.

After a series of successful development projects, the technology was ready for "advanced development," funded by the award of two more contracts. This stage involves final design, manufacturing, engaging the FDA, and marketing.

The S&T teams says the autoinjector yielded excellent test results with an extended drug shelf-life and effective delivery of critical battlefield medications. They believe the technology is positioned to impact both military and civilian healthcare significantly.

"We are appreciative of AFWERX and other SBIR programs," said Dr. Scott Walter, S&T's Director of Technology Transfer. "They enable the military to identify, evaluate, and co-develop mission-essential medical products with small businesses that spin in new ideas and technologies and enhance our military medical capabilities."



A U.S. Air Force medical Airman provides simulated point of injury treatment during Medics Rodeo 2022 at Melrose Air Force Range, N.M., Aug. 16, 2022. A total of 16 Air Force medical teams from around the world competed in the rodeo, which is designed to test and improve their skills in both deployed environments and at home station. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Candin Muniz)

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Note: The small business medical device innovator referenced in the article, RxBandz, LLC, was awarded contracts in conjunction with the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program, established by U.S. Congress in 1982 to fund research and development. This article is informational only and does not imply Department of Defense endorsement of any company or organization.

For information on U.S. Air Force AFWERX, visit <https://afwerx.com/divisions/ventures/sbir-sttr-program-overview/>. For information on the 59th Medical Wing's Chief Scientist's Office, visit <https://wilfordhall.tricare.mil/About-Us/59-MDW-Chief-Scientists-Office-Science-and-Technology>.

Strength in Unity: Advancing Military Medicine Through Collaboration

VelocityTX's LinkedIn Post, October 24, 2024

Today the VelocityTX Innovation Center was honored to host a meeting of the San Antonio Military Medical Research Leaders Consortium (SAMMRL). Comprised of representatives from across San Antonio's military medical community, SAMMRL was established in 2021 to promote ongoing communication between the city's various research units. Thank you all for coming to the campus this morning--we look forward to seeing you again soon! #militarymedicalresearch #collaboration #SAMMRL

[https://www.linkedin.com/posts/velocitytx_militarymedicalresearch-collaboration-sammrl-activity-7255260789605871616-eBuk?](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/velocitytx_militarymedicalresearch-collaboration-sammrl-activity-7255260789605871616-eBuk?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop)
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NAMRU San Antonio Soldiers Compete for NCO & Soldier of the Year

By Burrell Parmer / Published Dec. 9, 2024, Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, TX

Soldiers assigned to Naval Medical Research Unit San Antonio's Research Services Directorate at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas, earned Non-Commissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year honors during the Fiscal Year 2024 Solider, NCO and Officer of the Year Competition ceremony, hosted by Col. James Jones, commander, Public Health Command, West.



Sgt. Gabriela Saldana and Pfc. Tyler Houchin were announced as the winners for NAMRU San Antonio while Sgt. Samantha Salas earned a participation medal.

Both Saldana and Houchin were awarded Army Commendation Medals, while Sgt. Carlos Torres of NAMRU San Antonio was awarded an Army Achievement Medal for his support of the competition, which for the first time included officers.

The Soldiers, joined by other personnel assigned to Public Health Command, West, took part in the three-day competition from Dec. 3-5, which consisted of an Expert Physical Fitness Assessment, Engagement Skills Trainer, Combat Water Survival Test, writing exam, land navigation, Army Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills, a 12-mile foot march, written essay, and an oral board.

"First and foremost, I would like to say thank you to the entire support team for putting on a fantastic, vigorous, and challenging competition," said Command Sgt. Maj. Delroy Barnett, who served as the ceremony's keynote speaker. "The competition was



Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston – (Dec. 3, 2024) – Soldiers assigned to Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio's Research Services Directorate earned Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) and Soldier of the Year honors during the Fiscal Year 2024 Solider, NCO and Officer of the Year Competition Ceremony hosted by Col. James Jones, commander, Public Health Command, West. NAMRU San Antonio's mission is to conduct gap driven combat casualty care, craniofacial, and directed energy research to improve survival, operational readiness, and safety of Department of Defense (DoD) personnel engaged in routine and expeditionary operations. It is one of the leading research and development laboratories for the U.S. Navy under the DoD and is one of eight subordinate research commands in the global network of laboratories operating under the Naval Medical Research Command in Silver Spring, Md. (U.S. Navy photo by Burrell Parmer, NAMRU San Antonio Public Affairs/Released)

Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston – (Dec. 3, 2024) – U.S. Army Pfc. Tyler Houchin (right), assigned to Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio's Research Services Directorate (RSD), participated in the annual Solider, Non-Commissioned Officer and Officer of the Year Competition hosted by Public Health Command, West. Houchin, of Vine Grove, Ky., earned Solider of the Year for NAMRU San Antonio. The Soldiers took part in the three-day competition which consisted of an Expert Physical Fitness Assessment (EPFA), Engagement Skills Trainer (EST), Combat Water Survival Test, writing exam, land navigation, Army Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills, a 12-mile foot march, written essay, and an oral board. NAMRU San Antonio's mission is to conduct gap driven combat casualty care, craniofacial, and directed energy research to improve survival, operational readiness, and safety of Department of Defense (DoD) personnel engaged in routine and expeditionary operations. It is one of the leading research and development laboratories for the U.S. Navy under the DoD and is one of eight subordinate research commands in the global network of laboratories operating under the Naval Medical Research Command in Silver Spring, Md. (U.S. Navy photo by Burrell Parmer, NAMRU San Antonio Public Affairs/Released)

designed to promote esprit de corps while recognizing outstanding NCOs and junior Soldiers, and for the first time in command's history, officers.

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”According to Barnett, it is essential for Soldiers to possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and mindset to excel in challenging landscapes.

”I want to express my deepest respect and gratitude to all the participants,” Barnett said. “You are a testament to the finest qualities of the American Soldier. Your achievements inspire us all, your resilience motivates us to push beyond our limits, and your unwavering commitment to excellence serves as a shining example for generations to come.

”NAMRU San Antonio’s mission is to conduct gap-driven combat casualty care, craniofacial, and directed energy research to improve survival, operational readiness, and safety of Department of Defense personnel engaged in routine and expeditionary operations.

It is one of the leading research and development laboratories for the U.S. Navy under the DOD and is one of eight subordinate research commands in the global network of laboratories operating under the Naval Medical Research Command in Silver Spring, Maryland

Naval Dental Researcher, Others Honored During Heroes of Military Medicine San Antonio Awards

By Burrell Parmer / Published Oct. 18, 2024, SAN ANTONIO, Texas

To bring the story of Military City USA’s unique military and civilian medical research and clinical care collaborations to national and global attention, the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Inc., hosted its 2024 Heroes of Military Medicine San Antonio Awards Program at The Red Berry Estate in San Antonio on Oct. 17, 2024.



Cmdr. Rachel Werner, Dental Corps, deputy chief science director of Naval Medical Research Unit San Antonio, was recognized as a Hero of Military Medicine honoree during the 2024 Heroes of Military Medicine San Antonio Awards Program held at The Red Berry Estate. Presenting the award was retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. (Dr.) Joseph Carvalho Jr., president and CEO of the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Inc., joined by Rear Adm. Walter Brafford, commander, Naval Medical Forces Development Command and chief of the U.S. Navy Dental Corps. (U.S. Navy photo by Malcom McClendon)

Brafford, commander, Naval Medical Forces Development Command.

”I’m honored to be here today to introduce Cmdr. Rachel Werner and to be part of this ceremony to recognize her accomplishments for Military Medicine,” said Brafford, who also serves as the chief of the U.S. Navy Dental Corps.

”In her current role as the deputy chief science director at the NAMRU San Antonio, CDR Werner oversees a \$20 million annual research budget and leads a team of military and civilian principal investigators, improving the survival and safety of personnel across the Department of Defense,” Brafford said. “She continuously provides one-on-one support in project development and grant writing, including reviewing and ranking more than 45 grant proposals for various funding opportunities from Defense Health Agency, Office of Naval Research, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, and numerous other sponsors.”

Werner was greatly appreciative of the foundation for taking the time and effort to recognize the contributions of military healthcare providers.

”I am grateful to my command’s former senior leadership, especially my prior chief science director, Dr. Sylvain Cardin, for taking me under his wing and changing the entire trajectory of my career. I also want to thank to my fellow healthcare researchers and providers, active duty and civilian alike, throughout DHA, for your incredible talents, collaborative efforts, and your passion for supporting our active duty and beneficiaries alike,” said Werner, who additionally serves as an assistant professor of Pathology at the Uniformed Services University and provides hands-on training to residents at BAMC and training in the development and execution of research projects for Air Force Postgraduate Dental School residents.

The event, in its third year, provided an opportunity to celebrate the Department of Defense public-private partnerships within the city by recognizing five honorees and their selfless dedication to serving the nation’s wounded, ill, and injured military service members.

Those honored included U.S. Navy Cmdr. Rachel Werner of Naval Medical Research Unit San Antonio, U.S. Army Lt. Col. Luis Rohena and U.S. Air Force Maj. Theodore Hart of Brooke Army Medical Center, and U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Travis Reyes.

”It is a real honor and privilege to host the annual Heroes of Military Medicine Awards,” said HJF President and CEO retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. (Dr.) Joseph Carvalho Jr., a former BAMC commanding general, to the audience. “Our honorees have displayed excellence in their areas of expertise and were personally selected for recognition by their respective command leaders. Additionally, we will introduce you to a Marine corporal who through his strength and courage personifies what is possible assisted by outstanding medical professionals such as those who are honored today.”

Werner, who additionally serves as a staff head and neck pathologist at BAMC, was nominated for the award by NAMRU San Antonio Commanding Officer Capt. Jennifer Buechel and was introduced by Rear Adm. Walter



Cmdr. Rachel Werner, Dental Corps, deputy chief science director of Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio, was recognized as a Hero of Military Medicine honoree during the 2024 Heroes of Military Medicine San Antonio Awards Program held at The Red Berry Estate. The awards program, hosted by the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Inc. (HJF), recognized exception community leaders who advance military medicine in and around the greater San Antonio area. (U.S. Navy photo by Burrell Parmer)

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U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Travis Reyes was recognized as a Hero of Military Medicine Ambassador honoree during the 2024 Heroes of Military Medicine San Antonio Awards Program held at The Red Berry Estate. Presenting the award was retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. (Dr.) Joseph Carvalho Jr., president and CEO of the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Inc., joined by U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Benjamin Watson, commanding general, Training and Education Command. The awards program, hosted by the HJF, recognized exceptional community leaders who advance military medicine in and around the greater San Antonio area. (U.S. Navy photo by Burrell Parmer)

over my time in service. For that, I am profoundly and internally grateful and I will certainly will never be able to repay you,” Watson said. “All the honorees tonight are truly impressive and are worthy of recognition, our thanks, and our congratulations. I believe tonight, they really saved the best for last, and I have the great honor of speaking to you about a truly extraordinary human, a U.S. Marine by the name of Cpl. Travis Reyes.”

Reyes was an observer/aerial gunner on a MV-22 Osprey training flight that crashed on the Tiwi Islands off the coast of Darwin, Australia on Aug. 27, 2023. Requiring immediate intensive care, he was treated at Royal Darwin Hospital and subsequently transferred to the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne, Australia, where he spent approximately two months in the Intensive Care Unit.

In a groundbreaking effort, the Department of Defense’s only Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation, or ECMO, team collaborated with the U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research Burn Center to orchestrate a complex retrieval mission to bring Reyes to BAMC once he was in better conditions. This mission was the longest ECMO retrieval in history and marked the first ECMO unit circuit change performed in a moving aircraft.

“I am so grateful to be standing before you today and receiving this award,” Reyes said. “There were many moments when I thought I would never make it, but because of my amazing support system and astonishing medical teams, I am able to be here in front of you all today.”

He thanked all who assisted in saving his life and in his rehabilitation. Additionally, he thanked his previous unit, Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 363 (Reinforced) for their continuous support of his wife and the Wounded Warrior Battalion for their support and guidance.

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Air Force Physician Committed to Pilot Advocacy

By Tech. Sgt. Tory Patterson / Published Dec. 4, 2024, JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-LACKLAND, Texas,

For servicemembers, the fear of seeking healthcare due to the potential of negative impact on one’s career is prevalent.

According to the Military Health System, approximately 60-70% of military personnel experiencing mental health problems do not seek mental health services, despite the benefits the care could provide.

U.S. Air Force Capt. (Dr.) William Hoffman is working relentlessly to change that. Specifically, he is researching the barriers keeping aviation personnel from seeking mental health care.

“Historically, aviators have experienced worry in seeking healthcare due to fear for what a change in health status would mean for their flying status,” explains Hoffman. “We are interested in building data-backed ways to change this paradigm to optimize both the mental health and medical readiness of our aviation personnel.”

“Finally, I say with a profound sense of awareness and gratitude, thank you to the mothers and fathers of our warfighters for trusting us, in every sense of the word, with the safety, the comfort, and the care of your children,” Werner added. “Please know that we take this trust very seriously, and we remain forever focused on researching and providing the best possible ways to care for them on the battlefield and back home.”

Towards the conclusion of the program, attendees heard remarks from U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Benjamin Watson, commanding general, Training and Education Command, who served as the tribute speaker for Reyes.

“Military medical professions have saved the lives of many of my Marines and Sailors



U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Travis Reyes was recognized as a Hero of Military Medicine Ambassador honoree during the 2024 Heroes of Military Medicine San Antonio Awards Program held at The Red Berry Estate. The awards program, hosted by the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, Inc., recognized exceptional community leaders who advance military medicine in and around the greater San Antonio area. Reyes was an observer/aerial gunner on a MV-22 Osprey training flight that crashed on the Tiwi Islands off the coast of Darwin, Australia on Aug. 27, 2023. Requiring immediate intensive care, he was treated at Royal Darwin Hospital and subsequently transferred to the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne, Australia, where he spent approximately two months in the Intensive Care Unit. In a groundbreaking effort, the Department of Defense’s only Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation team collaborated with the U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research Burn Center to orchestrate a complex retrieval mission to bring Reyes to BAMC once he was in better conditions. This mission was the longest ECMO retrieval in history and marked the first ECMO unit circuit change performed in a moving aircraft. (U.S. Navy photo by Burrell Parmer)

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U.S. Air Force Capt. (Dr.) William Hoffman, a neurologist, 59th Medical Wing Joint Integrated Clinical Medicine medical director, and aviation enthusiast is researching the barriers keeping aviation personnel from seeking mental health care. “Historically, aviators have experienced worry in seeking healthcare due to fear for what a change in health status would mean for their flying status,” explains Hoffman. “We are interested in building data-backed ways to change this paradigm to optimize both the mental health and medical readiness of our aviation personnel.” (Defense Health Agency photo by Jason Edwards).

Hoffman, a neurologist and 59th Medical Wing Joint Integrated Clinical Medicine medical director, is sharing his research on brain and mental health optimization for DoD personnel in aviation and space environments far and wide. From contributions to popular science magazine *Scientific American*, to podcasts, news media, and documentary appearances, he’s helping “sound the alarm” on an issue impacting both civilian and military aviation personnel.

In 2023, the Federal Aviation Administration chartered the Mental Health & Aviation Medical Clearances Aviation Rulemaking Committee or “Mental Health ARC.” Hoffman served as a DoD representative on the ARC, along with other experts in aerospace, psychiatric, and psychological medicine and members of the transportation industry, academia, and pilot and air traffic controller organizations. Their findings were published in an FAA April 2024 report.

The report, which can be read on the FAA website, outlines factors that may prevent individuals holding FAA medical certificates or clearances from reporting mental health issues. The committee identified that factors like culture, trust, fear, stigma, financial concerns, existing processes, and knowledge gaps can all create barriers to seeking mental health treatment.

Additionally, the report provides 24 recommendations that Hoffman describes as “sweeping changes to current mental health policies, including dropping the need for pilots and controllers to inform the FAA when they see a therapist and easing the pathway to medication use for aviation workers.”

“The discourse about mental health in aviation is quickly evolving from ‘is it the right thing to do’ (which it is!) to discussions about its role in safety and medical readiness,” explained Hoffman. “How do we optimize the mental health and wellness of aviation personnel with a focus on medical readiness?”

According to data gathered by Hoffman and his colleagues, a study of 5,170 pilots across the U.S. and Canada showed that 56% reported a history of health care avoidance based on fear of

losing their flying status.

The FAA continues to review the committee’s recommendations and in April added three medications commonly used to treat anxiety and depression to its list of potentially allowable antidepressants.

With experience and rigorous research, Hoffman continues to share the narrative of mental health being a shared responsibility. “We can all promote mental health in our Air Force through spreading accurate information; for example, you can be an Air Force pilot or other rated job and seek mental healthcare,” he explained. “We can also talk openly about mental health and be a listening and available ear for others.”

According to Hoffman, he views his and his colleagues’ research and data generation as a “small piece of the large pie” that can guide decisions ranging from individual patient care to developing health policies that will meet patients’ needs.

“It is a privilege to be one voice among many discussing the opportunities ahead to optimize the mental health and wellness of aviation personnel in our Air Force and beyond.”

CU Researchers Present Findings and Earn Distinguished Awards at Military Health System Research Symposium | Investigators working with the CU Center for COMBAT Research showcased their commitment to advancing military medicine through a wide range of research topics, educational efforts, and technological developments.

by Kara Mason | September 4, 2024, University of Colorado, Anschutz Medical Campus, Department of Emergency Medicine, School of Medicine

Investigators and faculty members from across the University of Colorado School of Medicine presented critical research informing health care and safety for military service members and earned notable accolades at this year’s Military Health Science Symposium (MHSRS).

The Department of Defense (DOD) hosted the event that attracted more than 4,000 attendees in Kissimmee, Florida, Aug. 26-29.

This year, collaborators and faculty members from the CU Center for Combat Medicine and Battlefield (COMBAT) Research, Firearm Injury Prevention Initiative (FIPI), and Airway, Trauma, Lung injury, and Sepsis (ATLAS) Research gave 28 presentations spanning several health topics, including mental health, traumatic injury, and critical care in extreme environments.

“MHSRS is where we align our shared mission of advancing military health. CU Anschutz and the Center for COMBAT Research are at the forefront, not just as participants but as leaders driving innovation, addressing critical capability gaps, and building strategic partnerships across academia, military, and industry,” says Vik Bebartha, MD, director of the Center for COMBAT Research and professor of emergency medicine.

Recognition for firearm injury prevention

At the symposium, FIPI was awarded the MHSRS Outstanding Research Accomplishment Team Award for the initiative’s dedication to collaboratively using evidence-based approaches in finding solutions to prevent firearm injuries and deaths, with a specific focus on suicide in the military.

The award recognizes outstanding research contributions by a team with a focus on significant accomplishments of high impact achieved during the past year.

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Members of the Firearm Injury Prevention Initiative and Center for COMBAT Research accept the MHSRS Outstanding Research Accomplishment Team Award.

“The U.S. has a rich history of learning from the health care successes of its military. Many of the medical innovations and advancements that we benefit from today started in the military with service members and their families,” Stanley says of the findings, which were published in JAMA Network Open earlier this year.



Vik Bebarta, MD, left, and Kathleen Flarity, DNP, PhD, right, pose for a photo with COL Gregory D. Gadson, the keynote presentation speaker at MHSRS

“The strength of MHSRS lies in the convergence of minds focused on a common goal—improving the health and readiness of our forces. The connections we’ve forged here—old friends and new collaborators alike—are the bedrock of future innovations in military medicine,” Bebarta says. “We are more committed than ever to driving solutions that will serve our warfighters and strengthen our national defense.”

<https://news.cuanschutz.edu/emergency-medicine/mhsrs-2024-award-research-military>

FIPI works to bring military service members’ voices to the table and include their experiences in study design, implementation, testing, and dissemination.

“At the end of the day, our goal is simple: to prevent firearm-related harms, including suicide,” says Ian Stanley, PhD, assistant research professor of emergency medicine. Stanley is the psychological health lead for the CU Center for COMBAT Research and military and veteran lead for FIPI.

“Our partnerships with stakeholders from across the military health system and the larger DOD enterprise are critical to that mission, and we are grateful for the recognition at MHSRS of our group’s accomplishments,” he continues.

Impact on military members and beyond

Researchers spanning the Departments of emergency medicine, surgery, anesthesiology, and several others, highlighted how military-focused solutions are also beneficial to global health and non-military communities.

In a plenary session — chosen from more than 2,000 submissions — Stanley presented results from an analysis of a national survey showing military-connected youth who have reported suicidal ideation and suicide plans are less likely to report carrying firearms than their civilian peers.



Left: James Eazor, MPH, presents a poster. Right: Adit Ginde, MD, MPH, presents results from the PREOXI trial during MHSRS.

That sentiment rings true for other presentations from Center for COMBAT Research members attending MHSRS.

Nee-Kofi Mould-Millman, MD, MSCS, PhD, professor of emergency medicine and principal investigator for the C3 Global Trauma Network, delivered findings on mild isolated head injury patient characteristics that inform medical evacuation decision-making and on freeze-dried plasma for hemorrhage treatment in civilian and military settings, while Adit Ginde, MD, MPH, professor of emergency medicine, presented findings for research on noninvasive ventilation for preoxygenation during emergency intubation.

Leading innovation with collaboration

Researchers from the Center for COMBAT Research highlighted innovations and the power of collaboration where it’s needed most in military health, from improving critical and casualty care in arctic conditions to peer-delivered lethal means safety counseling and translational research on traumatic injury.

MHSRS also brought the chance to connect with international colleagues who work to conduct research that improves infrastructure and outcomes on the frontlines, including in Ukraine where emergency medicine faculty members are working to launch a research platform for studying war-related wound infections and inform future clinical trials.

For the CU Center for COMBAT Research, partnerships are the foundation of transforming research into effective policy, updating or establishing new guidelines, and creating new treatment options that save and improve lives for service members.

Medical Education and Training Campus Granted Reaccreditation Status

By Lisa Braun / Published Dec. 19, 2024, JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-FORT SAM HOUSTON, TX

The Medical Education and Training Campus at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas, was granted reaffirmation of its nationally recognized institutional accreditation status effective Dec. 12, following more than a year of intensive preparation that culminated in an on-site campus assessment that took place Aug. 6-7.



Robert Stockton (right), Council on Occupational Education (COE) Evaluation Team leader, speaks with Medical Education and Training Campus Radiologic Technologist students, Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Xaviour Beasley and Army Pfc. Michael Jennings, during a tour of the Radiologic Technologist course X-ray laboratory as part of the COE evaluation site visit on Aug. 7, 2024

Accreditation is a status granted to an educational institution or program that has been found to meet or exceed stated criteria of educational quality and student achievement. It assures quality and assists in improvement if needed.

The Council on Occupational Education, or COE, a national institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, awarded METC with the maximum accreditation period of six years.

“This is an amazing achievement and a testament to the dedication of everyone at METC,” said Col. David Walmsley, METC commandant. COE accreditation is granted to qualifying institutions following an arduous reaffirmation process to ensure that academic institutions, including METC, are abiding by all standards for national accreditation.

METC has been through the process three times since opening its doors in 2010, successfully maximizing its accreditation status each time.

Leading up to the most recent COE on-site assessment, the METC standards and evaluation division headed an organizational-wide self-study effort. The self-study is a process to examine METC’s qualifications for accreditation through a comprehensive, internal evaluation conducted by METC staff in accordance with COE guidelines. It also provides an opportunity to make improvements or corrections where needed.

The self-study involved several teams of METC personnel engaged in eighteen months of research, meetings, and tasks. The final self-study report was provided to the COE evaluators and scrutinized prior to the site visit.

The COE evaluators reviewed the METC self-study and strategic plan and toured 10 of 49 training courses to examine compliance with COE’s 30 conditions of accreditation and 343 standard criteria. While touring the programs, the evaluators inspected the facilities and interviewed department chairs, course directors, instructional system specialists, faculty, and students.



Robert Stockton (right), Council on Occupational Education (COE) Evaluation Team leader, speaks with Medical Education and Training Campus Army, Navy, and Air Force Medical Laboratory students during a tour as part of the COE evaluation site visit on Aug. 7, 2024.



The Council on Occupational Education Evaluation Team meets with Medical Education and Training Campus leadership during the in brief at the start of the COE on-site campus assessment on Aug. 6, 2024.



Robert Stockton (left), Council on Occupational Education Evaluation Team leader, with Medical Education and Training Campus Standards and Evaluation leadership team: Lt. Col. Adrienne Fields, Dr. Suzan Bowman, Master Sgt. Fabien Neeley, and Master Sgt. Rita Scott following the COE evaluation site visit out brief on Aug. 7, 2024.

During the out brief with METC leadership following COE’s two-day site assessment, the evaluation team shared that METC was found to meet all conditions of accreditation with no findings or recommendations for improvement.

The official notice of reaffirmation was announced following the conclusion of the COE Commission’s review of METC’s self-study report, team report, institutional response report, and other supporting documents for the reaffirmation of accreditation in December, culminating in METC’s reaccreditation status.

“The assessors provided multiple accolades regarding the professionalism of all the staff and students,” Walmsley said. “Thanks to the great teamwork, METC has demonstrated that we continue to provide world class enlisted medical training to support mission readiness in peacetime and war.”

NAMRU San Antonio talks Nanoparticles at 10th Mission Possible

By Burrell Parmer / Published Nov. 15, 2024 JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-FORT SAM HOUSTON, TX

Leadership, research scientists, and support staff of Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio attended the 10th Edition of Mission Possible, an information-sharing event, held at the Tri-Service Research Laboratory at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas, on Nov. 13.

The purpose of Mission Possible is to better inform members of the command on the tactics, techniques, and procedures of the science directorates to include the resource acquisitions and administrative directorates.

This iteration of Mission Possible focused on “perspective” and how disruptive technologies are providing views of a previously unseeable world, opening windows of opportunity for military scientists to conduct extraordinary experiments that produce tools and technologies giving overmatch to warfighters.

Dr. Sakhrat Khizroev, a Victor Clarke Endowed Chair Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Miami, was invited, via video conference, to present research of using Magnetolectric Nanoparticles (MENPs) for revolutionizing medical applications.

“The MENPs created by Dr. Khizroev are one of those disruptive technologies that untethers the imagination, providing an incredible opportunity to listen to the individual cells of the brain as they do their bidding without disturbing, influencing, or estimating their actions,” said Dr. Darrin Frye, NAMRU San Antonio's chief science director, who invited Khizroev to speak.

After the presentation, research scientists were afforded the opportunity to ask questions regarding Khizroev’s research.

NAMRU San Antonio’s mission is to conduct gap driven combat casualty care, craniofacial, and directed energy research to improve survival, operational readiness, and safety of Department of Defense personnel engaged in routine and expeditionary operations. It is one of the leading research and development laboratories for the U.S. Navy under the DOD and is one of eight subordinate research commands in the global network of laboratories operating under the Naval Medical Research Command in Silver Spring, Maryland.



JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-FORT SAM HOUSTON – (Nov. 13, 2024) – Capt. Jennifer Buechel, Nurse Corps, of Woodhaven, Mich, commanding officer, Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio, addresses research scientists and support staff during the Navy under the DoD and is one of eight subordinate research commands in the global network of laboratories operating under the Naval Medical Research Command in Silver Spring, Md. (U.S. Navy photo by Burrell Parmer, NAMRU San Antonio Public Affairs/Released) 10th Edition of Mission Possible, an information-sharing event, held at the Tri-Service Research Laboratory. The purpose of Mission Possible is to better inform members of the command on the tactics, techniques, and procedures of the science directorates to include the resource acquisitions and administrative directorates. NAMRU San Antonio’s mission is to conduct gap driven combat casualty care, craniofacial, and directed energy research to improve survival, operational readiness, and safety of Department of Defense (DoD) personnel engaged in routine and expeditionary operations. It is one of the leading research and development laboratories for the U.S. Navy under the DoD and is one of eight subordinate research commands in the global network of laboratories operating under the Naval Medical Research Command in Silver Spring, Md. (U.S. Navy photo by Burrell Parmer, NAMRU San Antonio Public Affairs/Released)



JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-FORT SAM HOUSTON – (Nov. 13, 2024) – Dr. Darrin Frye, of Kingman, Kan., chief science director, Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio, speaks to NAMRU San Antonio research scientists and support staff during the 10th Edition of Mission Possible, an information-sharing event, held at the Tri-Service Research Laboratory. The purpose of Mission Possible is to better inform members of the command on the tactics, techniques, and procedures of the science directorates to include these source acquisitions and administrative directorates. NAMRU San Antonio’s mission is to conduct gap driven combat casualty care, craniofacial, and directed energy research to improve survival, operational readiness, and safety of Department of Defense (DoD) personnel engaged in routine and expeditionary operations. It is one of the leading research and development laboratories for the U.S. Navy under the DoD and is one of eight subordinate research commands in the global network of laboratories operating under the Naval Medical Research Command in Silver Spring, Md. (U.S. Navy photo by Burrell Parmer, NAMRU San Antonio Public Affairs/Released)

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-FORT SAM HOUSTON – (Nov. 13, 2024) – Leadership, research scientists and support staff attended the 10th Edition of Mission Possible, an information-sharing event, held at the Tri-Service Research Laboratory. The purpose of Mission Possible is to better inform members of the command on the tactics, techniques, and procedures of the science directorates to include the resource acquisitions and administrative directorates. NAMRU San Antonio’s mission is to conduct gap driven combat casualty care, craniofacial, and directed energy research to improve survival, operational readiness, and safety of Department of Defense (DoD) personnel engaged in routine and expeditionary operations. It is one of the leading research and development laboratories for the U.S. Navy under the DoD and is one of eight subordinate research commands in the global network of laboratories operating under the Naval Medical Research Command in Silver Spring, Md. (U.S. Navy photo by Burrell Parmer, NAMRU San Antonio Public Affairs/Released)



DHA Research & Engineering Visits NAMRU San Antonio

By Burrell Parmer / Published Dec. 11, 2024, JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-FORT SAM HOUSTON, TX



Dr. Sean Biggerstaff, principal deputy director, Research and Engineering Directorate, Defense Health Agency, joined by Deputy Director Matt Gray, visited with leadership and staff of Naval Medical Research Unit San Antonio at the Battlefield Health and Trauma Research Institute on Dec. 10 to discussed prioritization of research priorities and the importance of building relationships in reference to funding of core capabilities and fiscal responsibilities.

NAMRU San Antonio's mission is to conduct gap driven combat casualty care, craniofacial, and directed energy research to improve survival, operational readiness, and safety of Department of Defense personnel engaged in routine and expeditionary operations. It is one of the leading research and development laboratories for the U.S. Navy under the DOD and is one of eight subordinate research commands in the global network of laboratories operating under the Naval Medical Research Command in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Dr. Sean Biggerstaff, principal deputy director, Research and Engineering Directorate, Defense Health Agency (DHA), joined by Deputy Director Matt Gray, visited with leadership and staff of Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio at the Battlefield Health and Trauma Research Institute to discussed prioritization of research priorities and the importance of building relationships in reference to funding of core capa-



Deputy Director Matt Gray, Research and Engineering Directorate, Defense Health Agency (DHA), joined by Principal Deputy Director Dr. Sean Biggerstaff, speaks with leadership and staff of Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio about investment strategies and portfolio management at the Battlefield Health and Trauma Research Institute to discussed prioritization of research priorities and the importance of building relationships in reference to funding of core capa-



Directed Energy Health Effects Director Dr. William D'Angelo, of Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio, briefs his directorate's capability to Dr. Sean Biggerstaff, principal deputy director, and Matt Gray, deputy director, Research and Engineering Directorate, Defense Health Agency (DHA) at the Battlefield Health and Trauma Research Institute. Biggerstaff and Gray visited with leadership and staff of Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio to discussed prioritization of research priorities and the importance of building relationships in reference to funding of core capabilities and fiscal responsibilities. (U.S. Navy photo by Burrell Parmer, NAMRU San Antonio Public Affairs/Released)



Commanding Officer Capt. Jennifer Buechel, Nurse Corps, of Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio, briefs the unit's mission to Dr. Sean Biggerstaff, principal deputy director, and Matt Gray, deputy director, Research and Engineering Directorate, Defense Health Agency (DHA) at the Battlefield Health and Trauma Research Institute. Biggerstaff and Gray visited with leadership and staff of Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio to discussed prioritization of research priorities and the



Dr. John Simecek, director, Craniofacial Health and Restorative Medicine, Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio, briefs his directorate's capability to Dr. Sean Biggerstaff, principal deputy director, and Matt Gray, deputy director, Research and Engineering Directorate, Defense Health Agency (DHA) at the Battlefield Health and Trauma Research Institute. Biggerstaff and Gray visited with leadership and staff of Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio to discussed prioritization of research priorities and the importance of building relationships in reference to funding of core capabilities and fiscal responsibilities. (U.S. Navy photo by Burrell Parmer, NAMRU San Antonio Public Affairs/Released)



Dr. Dao Ho, a research scientist, assigned to Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio, briefs the unit's Combat Casualty Care and Operational Medicine capability to Dr. Sean Biggerstaff, principal deputy director, and Matt Gray, deputy director, Research and Engineering Directorate, Defense Health Agency (DHA) at the Battlefield Health and Trauma Research Institute. Biggerstaff and Gray visited with leadership and staff of Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio to discussed prioritization of research priorities and the importance of building relationships in reference to funding of core capabilities and fiscal responsibilities. (U.S. Navy photo by Burrell Parmer, NAMRU San Antonio Public Affairs/Released)



Dr. Darrin Frye, chief science director of Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio, elaborates on the unit's core capabilities to Dr. Sean Biggerstaff, principal deputy director, and Matt Gray, deputy director, Research and Engineering Directorate, Defense Health Agency (DHA) at the Battlefield Health and Trauma Research Institute. Biggerstaff and Gray visited with leadership and staff of Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) San Antonio to discussed prioritization of research priorities and the importance of building relationships in reference to funding of core capabilities and fiscal responsibilities. (U.S. Navy photo by Burrell Parmer, NAMRU San Antonio Public Affairs/Released)

AFRL's C-STARS Cincinnati Honored at 2024 Heroes of Military Medicine

Published May 29, 2024, By Aleah M. Castrejon, Air Force Research Laboratory Public Affairs

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio (AFRL) — The Center for Sustainment of Trauma and Readiness Skills, or C-STARS, Cincinnati was honored at the 2024 Henry M. Jackson Foundation, or HJF, Heroes of Military Medicine Award ceremony May 9, 2024, at the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. Col. (Dr.) Valerie Sams, director of C-STARS, Cincinnati, at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center Division of Trauma Critical Care, accepted the award as the 2024 Hero of Military Medicine Ambassador.



From left: Maj. Gen. Jeannine M. Ryder, commander of the Air Force Medical Agency and chief of the Air Force Nurse Corps; Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Davis, retired U.S. Army; Col. (Dr.) Valerie Sams, director, Center for Sustainment of Trauma Readiness, or C-STARS, Cincinnati at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center Division of Trauma Critical Care; and Dr. Joseph Carvalho, president and CEO of Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine, stand together to honor Sams on behalf of C-STARS Cincinnati's, May 9, 2024, in Washington, D.C., at the 2024 HJF Heroes of Military Medicine Award ceremony. The C-STARS program is part of the United States Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine, which falls under the Air Force's 711th Human Performance Wing and the Air Force Research Laboratory. The C-STARS Cincinnati location at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center in Ohio serves as the platform for the critical care air transport-advanced training. (Courtesy photo / Image Link Photography)

of C-STARS Cincinnati.

As a joint program between the University of Cincinnati Health and the Air Force, the C-STARS Cincinnati program enables military health care providers to sustain their skills and knowledge through collaboration with civilian counterparts, Ryder said.

Ryder emphasized the uniqueness of the C-STARS Cincinnati program, particularly due to its training and validation for the CCAT teams.

"The CCAT teams are responsible for providing the highest level of care for patients in the back of an aircraft or, as we call it, the [intensive care unit, or] ICU, in the sky," Ryder said.

The benefits of this training extend beyond the military, impacting civilian and military communities.

In a video shown at the awards ceremony, Sams recalled a memorable moment in her career.

"I'd returned from a deployment to Afghanistan as a trauma surgeon, and we were called to come pick up [Sgt. 1st Class Ryan Davis, retired U.S. Army], a soldier who had been severely injured in Afghanistan," Sams said.

The C-STARS program is part of the United States Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine, or USAFSAM, which falls under the Air Force's 711th Human Performance Wing and the Air Force Research Laboratory, or AFRL. Located at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center, C-STARS Cincinnati serves as the platform for Critical Care Air Transport, or CCAT-Advanced train.

The HJF for the Advancement of Military Medicine hosted this year's event. HJF is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing military medicine by serving military, medical, academic and government clients. This year's award recognized the C-STARS team for its exemplary military-civilian medical partnership, which enhances clinical readiness to save lives both domestically and on the battlefield.

"We owe a debt to the people that we are recognizing this evening because they are the exemplars," said Maj. Gen. (Dr.) Paul Friedrichs, the ceremony's keynote speaker and joint staff surgeon at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. "They embody the best in military medicine, whether nurse, clinical social worker or physician. They are this year's best of the best among the tens of thousands who have dedicated their lives to serve men and women in uniform."

Maj. Gen. Jeannine M. Ryder, commander of the Air Force Medical Agency and chief of the Air Force Nurse Corps, introduced Sams and highlighted the importance



Col. (Dr.) Valerie Sams, director, Center for Sustainment of Trauma Readiness, or C-STARS, Cincinnati at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center Division of Trauma Critical Care, speaks to the audience at the 2024 Henry M. Jackson Foundation, or HJF, Heroes of Military Medicine Award ceremony on May 9, 2024, in Washington, D.C. Sams received the award, on behalf of the C-STARS Cincinnati team, as the 2024 Hero of Military Medicine Ambassador, honoring their contributions to the medical field. The C-STARS program is part of the United States Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine, which falls under the Air Force's 711th Human Performance Wing and the Air Force Research Laboratory. (Courtesy photo/Image Link Photography)

Continued from page 10

Sams's team met with a critical care transport team in Germany before flying downrange to pick up Davis. Although Davis did not need extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, or ECMO, continuous dialysis was provided throughout his transport. The CCAT team was essential in caring for Davis during the 20-hour flight from Afghanistan to San Antonio, Texas.

Thanks to the efforts of the CCAT and C-STARS Cincinnati team, Davis made it home and recovered.

Davis attended the ceremony and expressed his gratitude.

"Col. Sams team's efficiency and accomplishing objectives goes beyond mere medals," Davis said. "By advancing the field in medicine, we're also advancing the innovation of combat, strengthening our nation and safeguarding our interest. Yet there is no medal that can truly capture the depth of your contributions."

Davis thanked Sams for her continued support.

"Col. Sams, you always made time to visit and support me, and your compassion and commitment have left an invaluable mark on my heart," he said. "Those of us in the military who have been fortunate enough to witness and contribute to the innovation that strengthen our nation know the impact will endure far beyond our time in the military."

Taking the podium, Sams expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to represent the C-STARS Cincinnati team and thanked her partners at the University of Cincinnati, especially Dr. Timothy Pritts, chief of Trauma Critical Care and General Surgery and a trauma surgeon at the University of Cincinnati and UC Health, who attended the ceremony with her.

"My job is an aspirational one," Sams said. "It's one that I've always wanted to become — the director of the C-STARS program in Cincinnati with this unique mission. It's truly the best of the best, and as part of the U.S. Air Force's School of Aerospace Medicine, the 711th [Human Performance Wing] team ... and Air Force Research Laboratory and Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, you don't find greater experts in critical care than what you find in the schoolhouse."

Having served in various roles in the military, including enlisted Army and as an Air Force officer on active duty and in a reserve status, Sams said she is living her dream as a trauma surgeon for the U.S. military.

"It really doesn't get much better than that," she added.

Reflecting on Davis's journey, Sams acknowledged that much of the struggle begins when the warfighters return home.

"We're working very hard with our CCAT team and our training pipeline to make sure we're ready for that next adventure," Sams said. "Whatever the world brings us, we want to be ready to bring the best care we can to the nation's warriors."

Sams emphasized her team's ongoing commitment to helping warfighters battle addiction, chronic pain and post-traumatic stress disorder.

"We're not done working on that," she said. "We're going to keep on working on that. So, thank you for this great opportunity. Thank you for a great night and I'm just truly honored and humbled to be here."

The 2025 Heroes of Military Medicine will be May 8, 2025.

About AFRL: The Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) is the primary scientific research and development center for the Department of the Air Force. AFRL plays an integral role in leading the discovery, development and integration of affordable warfighting technologies for our air, space and cyberspace force. With a workforce of more than 12,500 across nine technology areas and 40 other operations across the globe, AFRL provides a diverse portfolio of science and technology ranging from fundamental to advanced research and technology development. For more information, visit www.afresearchlab.com.



The audience applauds as civilian and military personnel are honored for their contributions to the medical field May 9, 2024, during the 2024 Henry M. Jackson Foundation, or HJF, Heroes of Military Medicine Award ceremony in Washington, D.C. Col. (Dr.) Valerie Sams, director, Center for Sustainment of Trauma Readiness, or C-STARS, Cincinnati at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center Division of Trauma Critical Care, was honored as the 2024 Hero of Military Medicine Ambassador on behalf of the C-STARS Cincinnati team. The C-STARS program is part of the United States Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine, which falls under the Air Force's 711th Human Performance Wing and the Air Force Research Laboratory. (Courtesy photo/Image Link Photography)

Clinician Scientist Investigator Opportunity Network Program (CSION) Graduates 2024 Class

News | Dec. 27, 2024, By Dr. Alexander J. Burdette (59th Medical Wing Chief Scientist's Office)

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-LACKLAND, Texas – The Clinician Scientist Investigator Opportunity Network (CSION) program recently celebrated the graduation of its 2024 class.

The graduating class includes (listed alphabetically):

U.S. Air Force Maj. Chase Aycock (Clinical Health Psychologist)
 U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Kelvin Bush (Cardiologist)
 U.S. Air Force Maj. Theodore Hart (Vascular Surgeon)
 U.S. Air Force Maj. Nicholas Villalobos (Pulmonary Critical Care Physician)
 U.S. Army Civilian Dr. Craig Woodworth (Psychologist)

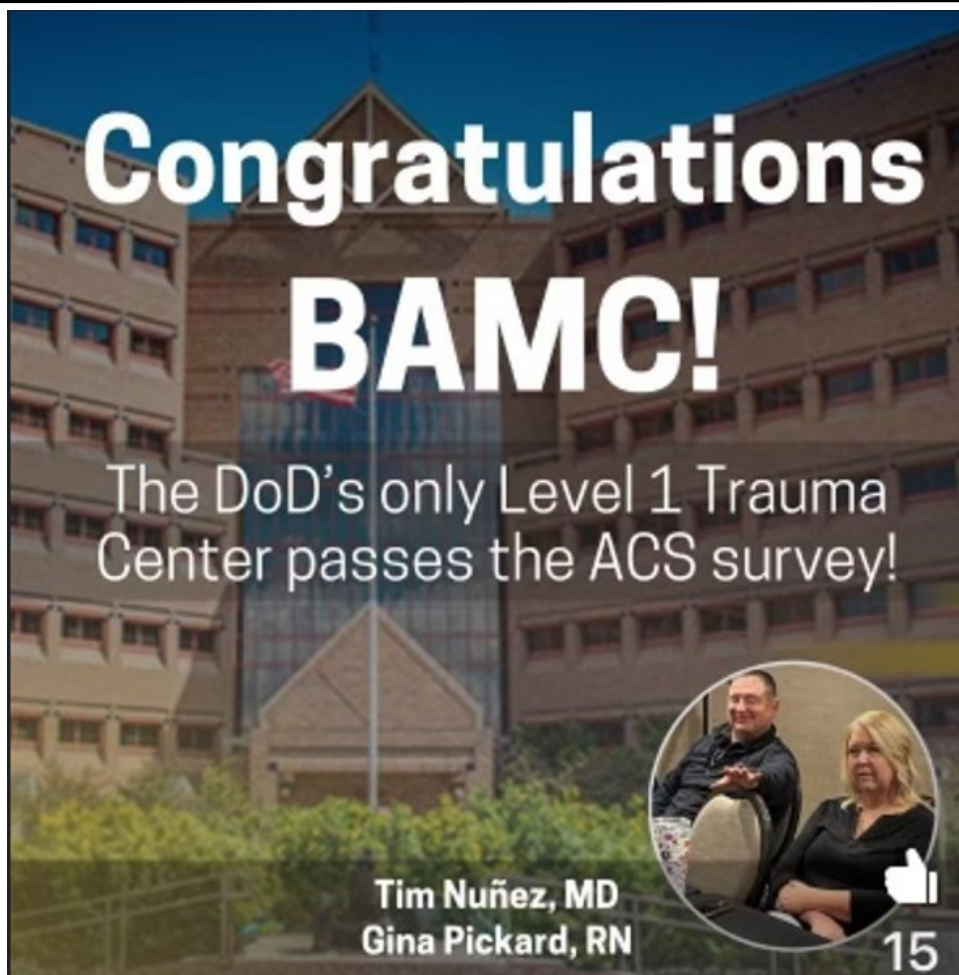
During their participation in the CSION program, the 2024 class produced 72 peer-reviewed manuscripts, six book chapters, 88 abstracts, 36 posters, and 34 podium presentations. The graduating class submitted 28 pre-proposals for grants, with 20 being invited back for full proposals. Notably, the graduating class had 12 proposals awarded for funding. These research accomplishments occurred while balancing 864 clinic days and 280 full surgery days.

The CSION program was initiated in 2019 and shepherds promising clinicians whose work has practical applications in becoming clinician-scientists. The CSION program is unique because it is tri-service, corps-neutral, has no service obligation, and focuses on its research mission rather than degree-granting.

The pipeline a CSION fellow follows is tailored to the needs of the military mission. With no service obligation, motivated members are offered a non-financial incentive to remain in a career tract specifically designed to retain research-focused medical academics in the military.

The program is led by the Chief of the Brooke Army Medical Center Department of Clinical Investigation, 59th MDW Office of the Chief Scientist, Science & Technology (ST), San Antonio Uniformed Services Health Education Consortium (SAUSHEC), and all their partners within the United States Army Institute of Surgical Research (USAISR), San Antonio Military Health System (SAMHS) and Naval Medical Research Unit San Antonio (NAMRU-SA) to provide mentors willing to train and mentor clinician scientists in all areas of (DHP RDT&E) programmatic research.

For more information on the CSION program, visit <https://wilfordhall.tricare.mil/About-Us/59-MDW-Chief-Scientists-Office-Science-and-Technology/CSION>.



Posted on the Joint Trauma System Facebook page.

SAMMRL Membership



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