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## **Military dental professionals learn how to work as teammates**

### ***TeamSTEPPS™ help reduce communication and medication errors***

The color wasn't purple but color wasn't the issue, when dentists, dental technicians, and dental support staffers from all the military services on Oahu met Jan. 26-29 at Tripler Army Medical Center's Kyser Auditorium.

More than two hundred military and civilian dental professionals gathered at Kyser for one of six half-day sessions to "learn an evidence-based teamwork system aimed at improving patient safety through a 'shared mental model,'" according to a [Jan 26 Armed Forces Press Service news release](#) about TeamSTEPPS (Team Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety).

The teamwork model has proved its worth at the 86<sup>th</sup> Combat Army Support Hospital in Iraq. "We saw a significant decrease in the number of errors due to communication issues and the number of medication errors that happened," said Dr. Shad Deering, an Army physician from Tacoma, Wash., during a [Jan. 22 interview on BlogTalkRadio.com](#).

TeamSTEPPS allows health care providers, brought together for the first time during deployments, to work together more efficiently and effectively as a team. The model provides a way for medics to quickly work through communication issues when planning, problem-solving and making adjustments to improve the processes involved in caring for patients.

Trainers from the DOD Patient Safety Program (<http://dodpatientsafety.usuhs.mil>) were in Hawaii to conduct the TeamSTEPPS training, hosted by the Army's Pacific Regional Dental Command. The training team consisted of Ms. Robbie Sjelin, RN, RDH, US Army Medical Command Patient Safety Center; Ms. Brigetta Craft, RN, Air Force Patient Safety Manager; Lt. Col. Valerie McDavid, DMD, patient safety officer and periodontist from Fort Bragg, N.C., and Maj. Tim Fildes, BDS, Dental British Exchange Officer, US Army Dental Command.

"The training went very well. We focused on improving teamwork, communications, and patient safety," said Col. William Bachand, Pacific Regional Dental Commander. "The real challenge will come as we try to implement these principles into our daily practices and then sustain that training."

According to the Department of Defense's Patient Safety Program, more than 100 military specialty units and clinics have received some level of TeamSTEPPS training and are in various stages of implementation in military treatment facilities.



**DENTAL HANDICRAFT.** In an introductory lesson in teamwork, Navy Lt. Thomas Atkins and civilians Karen Styan and Claudia Fraijo (from left to right) intently watch Navy Hospitalman Jacquea Hargrove and Army Spec. Donald Knollenberg tape paper strips together to make the longest paper chain they can in a minute and a half. U.S. Army photo by Leslie Ozawa.