



TRIPLER ARMY MEDICAL CENTER

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Dec. 5, 2006

Joint effort, team work plays key role, injured Sailors receive top-notch care

Story by Mindy Anderson, Tripler Public Affairs Office
Photos by Col. Richard Stack



This image shows three of the six bays set-up in preparation to receive the six injured Sailors. Equipment is combined TAMC and B-SMART team. The green boxes on the floor are the B-SMART monitors and black frames that support all the monitors, IV pumps, suction, and other support equipment. These black metal frames attach directly to the NATO stretchers for transport.

Honolulu, HI. -- At 2:45 a.m. Friday, Tripler Army Medical Center (TAMC) received a call reporting a steam leak onboard the USS Frank Cable in Guam.

Six Sailors with serious burns (five ventilator-dependent) were sent to the U.S. Naval Hospital in Guam for initial stabilization.

These Sailors arrived at TAMC at 6 a.m. Saturday and were met by the Burn

Special Medical Augmentation Response Team (B-SMART) who deployed from Brooke Medical Army Center (BAMC), Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

The nine-member B-SMART was comprised of the military's leading experts in

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the field of burn trauma, and arrived in Hawaii midnight Friday.

“Before arriving it was proposed that we go to a civilian burn unit in Hawaii, but we stressed we wanted to be in a military setting since we were dealing with military personnel and the Department of the Army Logistics System – we knew it would run smoother,” said Col. David Barillo, officer-in-charge, B-SMART, BAMC. “Personnel at both Tripler and Hickam Air Force Base gave 1,000 percent care toward the patients when they arrived.”

The B-SMART officer-in-charge said the effort at Tripler was absolutely incredible – anyone who could remotely help was offering to help.

“People called throughout the time we were there offering to come in and help,” Barillo said. “We brought enough equipment for the six burn victims, but we were able to set-up a six-bed burn trauma area in the Tripler Patient Acute Care unit

because Tripler staff had everything set-up – IV fluids, narcotics, bandages – every thing we needed was provided.

The healthcare professionals at TAMC worked closely with the burn trauma experts of BAMC to ensure the Sailors received the best care available as quickly as possible.

“TAMC and [B-SMART] staff worked as a team with each patient -- true support partnership in every sense,” said Col. Arthur Wallace, deputy commander for



10 minutes after taking the image at Top Left, the PACU was filled. In fact, more support personnel assisted after the initial assessments to intervene and assist as needed throughout the day. Pace was extremely high and didn't stop.

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nursing, TAMC. “Command Sgt. Maj. [Joel Jenkins, TAMC] provided runner support. Nutrition Division support is provided breakfast, water, and break room snacks for all. Radiology staff was on stand-by for portables. Residents, nursing staff, and support staff provided extra arms for lifting, assistance with IV pumps, shaving, wrapping with silver wrap dressings, etc,” Wallace reported.

TAMC’s Chaplain (Lt. Cmdr.) Robert Fuehrer, TAMC Navy Chaplain provided support and assistance to the injured Sailors and the two families who accompanied the patients to Hawaii.

“It was such a privilege to be a part of a joint effort such as this,” Fuehrer said. “It didn’t matter what we were wearing, Fuehrer said. “It’s ONE TEAM, ONE FIGHT, working together for the health and welfare of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines was such an honor,” he said.



After the patient has been fully prepared and stabilized for transport with the B-SMART team, the metal support is fixed to the NATO stretcher supporting the monitors, electronic IV pumps, suction, and fluids/IV medications required to treat and stabilize for the expected nine-hour flight. We supplied the team with enough albumin, IV fluids, and medications for three days, which is the practice just in case they have to land before the final destination and the local medical support is not robust.

Fuehrer spoke with the one patient who was ambulatory, and he said the patient seemed pleasantly surprised when he walked through the door.

“I think it brightened his spirits that a Naval Chaplain walked through the door in

an Army medical facility,” Fuehrer said. “Being available to the Navy personnel provided a sense of comfort and familiarity that further bridged a gap

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between the service.”

Col. Richard Stack, surgeon, TAMC, credited everyone involved with phenomenal professionalism and teamwork.

“When the Sailors first arrived in the PACU, we had people from the Army burn team, our Tripler team, the team from the Navy Hospital in Guam, the Air Force Critical Care Air Transport Team, and GS civilians all working together with only one mission in mind – to save the lives of these Sailors, and it didn’t matter who you were,” Stack said.

So many pieces came together to make this mission a success.

According to Stack, Straub Clinic and Hospital loaned Tripler Silverlon bandages which enhanced the treatment of the burn wounds. In addition, he said they called twice during the day to see if we needed any additional items or assistance

“Pharmacy was hopping,” Stack said. “Normally closed on weekends, they set-up and staffed the nearby satellite pharmacy with dedicated assets for this mission. Up to three pharmacy personnel were required at one time due to the high demand,” he said.

Wallace reported Tripler’s Anuenue Café delivered food to the adjacent break area for the team including cold water and juice. The water and juice, along with Red Bull, were consumed at high amounts due to the elevated temperature of the room which was done to decrease lost body temperature by the burn patients, a significant issue in burn patients.

There were other supporting factors that played a role in the success of this mission.

“Tripler Facilities Management increased the room temp before the Sailors arrived and also three operating rooms if surgery was required; IMD configured all the phones in the PACU to enable contact with Guam, the mainland, just everywhere,” Stack said. “We could have called God if we had wanted to – that’s how efficient it was,” he said.

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Additionally, the planning and coordination played a significant role.

As soon as TAMC was aware of what happened, the planning and coordination began. Key players met at 11 a.m. Friday morning and again at 4 p.m. to make sure all coordination had been made, Stack said. One of the key pieces that helped TAMC prepare was the Electronic ICU. TAMC had telemedicine, video, and monitor review of the Guam ICU at TAMC – “We could view these patients until they left for transport from Guam to Hawaii,” Stack said.

By all accounts this was a hugely successful joint mission and a morale booster for all involved.

“The teamwork displayed by all parties involved contributed significantly to the success of this well coordinated life saving mission,” said Col. Derick Ziegler, chief of staff, TAMC. “Most importantly, this well coordinated joint effort by all involved resulted in these severely injured Sailors getting the necessary superb life sustaining medical care. A special thanks goes to Col. [Richard] Stack, our surgeon-in-charge, for making the coordinated effort seamless and professional,” Ziegler said.

Stack concluded the integrated multiservice multidisciplinary teams worked so well together that you would have concluded they had been working together for years.