



# TRIPLER ARMY MEDICAL CENTER

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## *For Immediate Release*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Tripler tests plans for pandemic flu**

TRIPLER ARMY MEDICAL CENTER— Tripler's basketball gym was transformed into an influenza "surge" clinic on Thursday, Nov. 19, as about 50 Tripler medical, security and operations personnel tested the medical facility's plans for a sudden rise in the number of people with influenza-like illnesses.

Since the outbreak of H1N1 in Mexico in April, Tripler healthcare leaders and planners have been working with other military and civilian medical officials on Oahu to develop plans in the event of a major surge in influenza cases in Hawaii.

"We hope for the best but must plan for the worst," said Col. Michael Sigmon, preventive medicine chief for Tripler and the Pacific Regional Medical Command.

A major concern for medical facilities is how best to separate those seeking help for flu symptoms from those seeking and receiving other types of care.

"We want to safely and effectively treat those with flu symptoms while preventing patients with other medical problems from getting the flu," said Sigmon. "For those patients with other medical conditions, contracting the flu would complicate their healthcare needs, as well as quickly overburden our medical staff."

"If there's a surge of people coming to Tripler, we want to first divert people seeking help for flu symptoms away from the hospital clinics," said Lt. Col. Stephen Innanen, Tripler operations chief.

"During an actual surge, medical staff at a temporary clinic would screen people with flu-like symptoms, sending only those needing intensive care to the hospital. Others with mild symptoms may be prescribed anti-viral medications and sent home to recover from their illness. That's what we simulated today," said Innanen.

Another concept tested was that of Tripler medical personnel supporting similar surge clinics at other major military installations on Oahu.

For updated information about the military vaccination program, please call the Flu Hotline (433-1FLU), check with your healthcare provider, or visit the Tripler Army Medical Center webpage, "Fight the Flu".



Tripler pediatric department's Staff Sgt. Michael Smith takes basic health information from an exercise role player signing in at the surge clinic set up at the Tripler gym during a pandemic flu exercise on Nov. 19. U.S. Army photo by Leslie Ozawa



Tripler medic Sgt. Thomas McManus (left) and Cpt. (Dr.) Warren Gambino discuss treatment options for a severely sick infant, represented by a doll, accompanied its mother, role-played by Tripler social work department's Sgt. Leanna Goodrum. U.S. Army photo by Leslie Ozawa