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News Release

Health Care Professionals Take on Realities of War

BETHESDA, Md. – The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) will deploy its medical, public health and advanced practice nursing students to Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa., July 15-24, 2008 for its annual field exercises. The exercises, Operation Kerkesner and Operation Bushmaster, are designed to prepare the students for complex and dangerous combat environments.

Operation Kerkesner for first-year medical students and Operation Bushmaster for fourth-year medical students and graduate nursing students are part of USU's unique curriculum providing significant real-world experience in the field supporting war-fighting, peace-keeping and humanitarian-assistance operations. Unlike other traditional academic health centers, USU prepares students to treat mass casualties under the constraints of strategic, operational and tactical situations with defined rules of engagement.

The exercise begins with students being airlifted from the USU campus in a CH-47 Chinook to the field site while managing the limitations of medical care in-flight. In the field, students treat patients while simultaneously organizing movement of their facility, performing triage, evacuation and managing mass casualty situations during the day and night.

The USU Department of Military and Emergency Medicine (MEM) develops and commands this annual exercise as the capstone of the USU curriculum merging classroom knowledge and battlefield training to treat combat trauma patients suffering from wounds like those caused by improvised explosive devices. "Since the Uniformed Services University opened its doors, preparing our graduates for the realities of war has never been more critical," said Col. Charles Beadling, U.S. Air Force, MC, vice chair and assistant professor, MEM. "They leave knowing that when the time comes, they will be ready. The graduates know that the men and women who sacrifice so much for our nation deserve the best possible care."

The exercises prepare students for natural or man-made disasters, develops cultural sensitivities, and enhances the capacity to practice field preventive medicine in mitigating the threat of water, food-borne and insect-transmitted illnesses.

Learning to Care for Those in Harm's Way

USU is a traditional academic health center with a unique set of programs all dedicated to preparing health care practitioners to take care of those in harms way, whether they are troops in battle abroad or those hurt in disasters at home. The medical and graduate nursing students are active-duty uniformed officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force or Public Health Service. The School of Medicine has a year-round, four-year curriculum, which is nearly 700 hours longer than other U.S. medical schools. USU grants the degrees of M.D., Ph.D., Dr.P.H., M.P.H., M.S., and M.S.N. Many of its alumni are supporting operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, offering their leadership and expertise. Approximately one-fourth of all active-duty military medical officers are USU graduates.

To coordinate attendance during Operation Kerkesner or Operation Bushmaster, call Tech. Sgt Andre Nicholson in the Office of External Affairs at (301) 295-1219 or visit the USU Web site at www.usuhs.mil for more information.

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