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News Release

Civil War wounded, killed educate medical students

BETHESDA, Md. – Throughout military medical history, America's bloodiest one-day battle, which took place more than 140 years ago, offers a very unique teaching tool for modern military medical training.

More than 150 medical students from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, or USU, will take part in a six-mile road march through the Antietam National Battlefield in Sharpsburg, Md., April 30, as part of their first-year curriculum.

"We pride ourselves on finding unique and effective ways to educate and train future medical professionals to respond under any circumstance and in any environment," said Dale Smith, USU senior vice president and historian. "Taking lessons from the past these future medical leaders become adept at providing 'good medicine in bad places.'"

Originally intended for the students to break in their new combat boots, the field exercise serves as a means of teaching students, from a historical perspective, the basic tenets of battlefield healthcare.

In the mid-1800s, then-Army Surgeon General of the Potomac Maj. Jonathan Letterman, recognized that care on the front lines, medical logistics and evacuation assets under the direction of a physician were key to delivering battlefield care. Letterman is also known as "The Father of Battlefield Medicine."

University medical students will march in small groups and stop at stations along the route to hear local Civil War re-enactors discuss conditions and battlefield strategies. University faculty members will also highlight the medical aspects of the battle.

The Battle of Antietam, which took place Sept. 17, 1862, is considered the bloodiest single-day battle in American history. More than 23,000 men were killed or wounded.

The USU educates health care professionals dedicated to career service in the Department of Defense and the U.S. Public Health Service. The university provides military and public health-relevant education, research, service, and consultation to the nation and the world, pursuing excellence and innovation during times of peace and war. Many graduates are supporting operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, offering their leadership and expertise. Approximately 25 percent of all active-duty military medical officers are USU graduates.

Media interested in attending the road march should contact the Office of External Affairs at (301) 295-3981 by noon, April 28. For additional information on USU, visit our Web site at www.usuhs.mil.

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