



Inside SWCS

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Think it's hard to become
a special-operations medic?

Try training them

By Caroline Goins
SWCS Public Affairs Office

The Special Warfare Medical Group (Airborne) is adding to its instructors' mental arsenal through new initiatives to sharpen their technical skills and teaching techniques.

"Instructor professionalism is one of the [SWCS commanding general's] top five priorities, so we asked ourselves: how can we make this better?" said Lt. Col. Sean Lee, the SWMG(A)'s deputy commander.

About half of the SWMG(A) cadre is made up of active-duty service-members with at least two or three combat deployments under their belts; the rest is made up of civilians and contractors who are mostly retired Special Forces Medical Sergeants or Navy medics.

These instructors offer a wide variety of knowledge and experience, Lee said.

"However, we realize that just because you're a good special-operations medic doesn't mean that you are naturally going to be a good classroom instructor," Lee said.

There are already certain requirements for service-members when they are assigned to lead medical training at SWMG(A); before standing before a class of students, these leaders must complete an Instructor Training Course and qualify on the class's subject matter. On top of this, new instructors crawl, walk, then run into their roles by observing a class, then

participating in a class, and finally teaching a class and receiving a peer critique.

"We have a great curriculum, but if an instructor can't teach and get the point across to the student, then we've failed," Lee said.

All SWMG(A) instructors are successfully qualified in their subject areas, and SWMG(A) is now introducing several new ways to further develop their skills.

Fortunately, they didn't have to look too far; a professional adult-educator already works for another SWCS directorate just down the street.

Dr. David Brand, a department chair in the Directorate of Regional Studies and Education, has been working with SWMG(A) to evaluate the education program and give instructors a better understanding of adult-education principles. Brand will lead professional development seminars with instructors on a monthly basis to "tweak" their methods and techniques.

"They already have a great system in place," Brand said. "My main concern is to get the instructors to think and reflect on methods specific to teaching adults."

For example, did you know that it takes at least 15 seconds for adults to formulate an answer to a

question; however, the average teacher only gives a 3- to 5-second pause before calling on a student?

Adult learners (21-years-old and up) want to see the relevance of what they're learning and how it applies, Brand said.

He said students only retain about 5 percent of what they read, but if students are engaged and can relate the information back to something they already know, the retention is much greater.

Subject matter experts from outside SWMG(A) visit with the cadre to provide advanced medical education and discussion. What has historically been a day for SWMG(A) cadre to focus on airborne training has grown into broader professional development days, by adding Brand's seminars as well as the advanced education.

In fact, the first joint SWMG(A) and University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill medical conference was held in January where more than 10 physicians and researchers spoke with instructors.

Lee said he hopes to hold a conference quarterly because the first was so well-received by the cadre and UNC's participants. There was so much discussion at the conference, we didn't even get through all the planned talking points, he said.

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Lt. Col. Sean Lee
Deputy Commander, Special Warfare Medical Group (Airborne)

SWMG(A) cadre rotations only make SOF medics better

By Sgt. Maj. Brian D. McCafferty

Interim Command Sergeant Major, Special Warfare Medical Group (A)

As with all SWCS instructors, the instructors at the Joint Special Operations Medical Training Center are extremely busy. There are five courses taught at the JSOMTC: the 50-week Special Forces Medical Sergeant Course, the 26-week Special Operations Combat Medic Course, the 24-week Special Operations Independent Duty Corpsman Course, the seven-week Civil Affairs Medical Sergeant Course and the two-week Special Operations Combat Medical Skills Sustainment Course.

Because of these five individual courses, the instructors are drawn from within all aspects of the special-operations medical community including the Navy and Air Force. They also include civilians, doctors, physician assistants, lab technicians and veterinarians, to name a few.

The overwhelming majority of the NCOs that are teaching at SWMG(A) volunteered specifically to come here so they could give back to special-operations medicine.

They are among the best instructor-NCOs that I have personally served with. Nearly all of them have extensive combat experience and pass those hard-earned lessons on to the students. Their passion and dedication are exemplified by the survival rate of special-operations warriors throughout our nation's current battles.

All of them hone their medical skills to an even higher level while teaching here. They mentor and lead our future SOF medics, making themselves better NCOs along the way.

For some of them, they are at a major decision point in their career; whether to continue on the operational track or to pursue a more medically focused path. Many are sacrificing huge amounts of personal time off-duty completing college courses preparing their packets for either physician assistant or medical school.

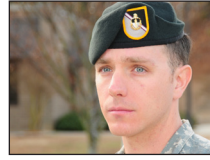
All the while, they're teaching the students how to be SOF medics all day long, starting at PT in the morning, throughout the day for didactic and hands-on instruction, and after school and on the weekends during study halls.

All the instructors at the JSOMTC, whether civilian, officer or enlisted; Navy, Air Force or Army; Special Forces, Civil Affairs or Ranger; are dedicated to ensuring that U.S. special-operations forces receive the best combat medics in the world. Bar none.

SWCS Cadre Profile

Sgt. 1st Class Eric Strand

Instructor, Joint Special Operations Medical Training Center



After six years of deploying as a medic with Special Forces teams, Sgt. 1st Class Eric Strand is enjoying his time as an instructor to the aspiring special-operations medics who will be taking care of his good friends around the world. Like many of the instructors at the Special Warfare Medical Group (Airborne), Strand offers his students wisdom that can only come from real-world combat medic experience. As for Strand, he's finding new challenges in earning a bachelor's of health sciences degree to build future skills.

On the best parts of being a SWMG(A) instructor:

The biggest thing I get out of this is being able to interact with students for a long period of time. One of the best things about being at the medic course is that in our phase of training, I have the same students for six straight months. I have a lot of chances to interact with them, to mentor them and to accentuate their strengths and figure out their weakness so I can head those off before they go into an operational unit.

On making the most of his spare time while at SWCS:

Personally, the best thing is having some time to go to college and having family time; after spending six years on a team it's a big change, and it's very important. I'm working on a pre-med degree, a bachelor's of health sciences at Campbell University. Most people here working on degrees are going to medical school, physician's assistant school or nursing school.

On bringing battlefield experience to the students:

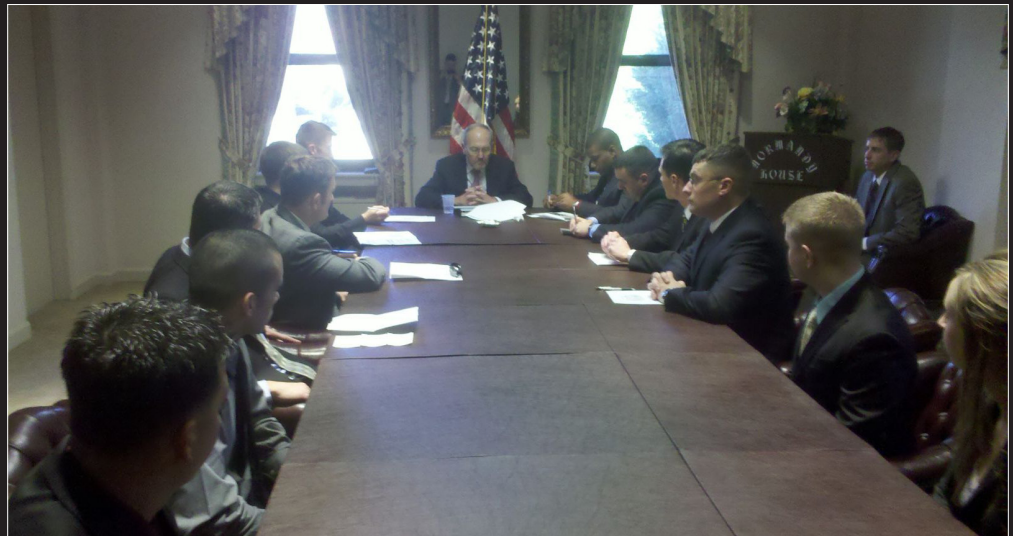
I have deployed multiple times to Iraq. As a medic, I've seen a lot of medical problems and also learned some ways to manage the stress of deployment while trying to maintain your skill-set.

On changes to the course since attending in 2002:

Now pretty much all the instructors in this building have had combat experience, and even though our instructor base is younger than it has been historically, I think we have more experience for the time we've served.

On taking care of his friends and teammates:

We all have a sense of personal responsibility; while it is nice to have a rest from deployments, we still have a lot of friends out there and most of us are eager to get back to teams. But at least we can send quality guys to our friends so they can continue providing the standards of care we think they need out there, while they're deployed.



Ambassador Brian E. Carlson, former U.S. ambassador to Latvia, receives a mission analysis brief from students of the Military Information Support Operations Qualification Course class 003/004-10. MISOQC graduates are expected to brief a variety of senior-ranking Department of State and Defense officials when executing their duties at home and abroad.

Upcoming Events

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
20	Presidents Day	22	Civilian Breakfast 7:30 - 9 a.m. USASOC/DFAC	Special Forces Qualification Course Graduation 3 p.m. Crown Coliseum	NDU Distinguished Lecture Series 10 a.m. JFK Auditorium	26
27	SWCS Key Leader Off-site begins	1	2	3	SWCS Key Leader Off-site ends	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12



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