

THE OUTPOST

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Veteran shares personal suicide story

By Mark Schauer

Each day, the United States loses one Soldier and 22 veterans to suicide.

Andrew O'Brien, an Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran, almost became part of this grim statistic. These days, he shares his experiences with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and suicide at military bases the world over, bringing to each a dose of reality from one who has lived it.

"I don't think PTSD is curable," he said. "It is something you learn to live with."

Before he was an anti-suicide activist, Andrew O'Brien was a young Soldier not unlike many others when he joined the Army in 2007. Raised in a broken home, he followed his older brother into the military, enticed by the sense of camaraderie and acceptance. His military occupational specialty was truck driver until three months into his first deployment to Iraq, when

he was offered the chance to become a lead gunner, which he readily accepted.

"That was the most excitement I ever felt in my life. It was the most responsibility I've ever been given and biggest purpose I ever had."

He was shot at more than once, but the most searing memory for O'Brien was seeing the burned and mutilated bodies of three Military Policemen who had been killed by an improvised explosive device (IED) blast. He was haunted by the sight, but leery of telling anyone. He felt the experience was tame relative to what other Soldiers, including his infantryman brother, experienced in their tours, and therefore he had no moral right to complain. He buckled down for his remaining time, and assumed he would be able to forget his deployment as soon as he got home. It didn't happen: he had recurring nightmares of the sight, sometimes with his girlfriend or close friends in the place of the three dead



(PHOTO BY MARK SCHAUER)

Yuma Proving Ground's Garrison Manager Rick Martin (right), presents Andrew O'Brien a certificate of appreciation for his outstanding personal suicide presentation.

Soldiers.

"Every single night I had this exhaustion and depression. Every single

night I experienced the worst thing I had ever seen in my life, and thought it would never end."

This combined with six months of excessive drinking finally led O'Brien to seek

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VETERAN

FROM PAGE 1

counseling. At first, it looked as though he would successfully cope.

He attended therapy sessions and his outlook improved, but as a result he was restricted from carrying a firearm or going to a shooting range. When his new 1st Sgt. said he wasn't a real Soldier anymore in front of a group of his peers, his humiliation prompted him to abruptly stop therapy. The closest people in his life slowly but surely fell away. Even his relationship with his brother, his closest relative, was distant due to deployments on different schedules. When an argument estranged him from his best friend, he reached the breaking point. He intentionally consumed the contents of several bottles of prescription pills, and would have died had he not had second thoughts at the last minute and called 911.

O'Brien's suicide attempt nearly cost him his life. After being comatose for several days, he awoke in the hospital to a phone call from his brother, who wanted to know why he never told him how he was feeling. O'Brien responded that what he saw in combat paled in comparison to what he and others had experienced.

"The worst thing you've ever experienced is the worst thing you've ever experienced," O'Brien recalled his brother telling him in response. "You can't compare it to anyone else. If you aren't affected by what you saw, there's something wrong with you."

That these supportive words came from another veteran gave O'Brien solace, and the kernel of an idea that brought him to become an anti-suicide activist concentrating on Soldiers and veterans.

These days, O'Brien visits American military bases around the world, urging everyone to remember that permanent solutions to temporary problems are often done on impulse with little discernible warning.

"I walked around with a smile on my face," he recalled. "I didn't plan it out. One day I had just had enough."

O'Brien thinks a culture where people feel free to share their experiences inoculates against despair.

"People are afraid to share their emotions because they think it makes them weak," he said. "We are not superhuman. We experience anxiety the same as anyone else."

To reach out to Soldiers and veterans

unable or unwilling to hear him in person, O'Brien's is currently producing a documentary featuring veterans from major conflicts from the Korean War forward. Having started in March, O'Brien expects the film will be released in January.

"Its veterans sharing their stories and struggles to show that they're not alone. I think the biggest part of people attempting to take their own lives is the feeling that they are alone."

O'Brien adds that having a purpose is also therapeutic.

"I'm still a lead gunner and can save people's lives," he said. "Instead of looking for a wire to an IED, I'm looking for triggers for suicide."

"People are afraid to share their emotions because they think it makes them weak. We are not superhuman. We experience anxiety the same as anyone else."

— Andrew O'Brien, an Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran



Honoring Gold Star Mothers

28 – 29 September 2013

For nearly a century, the Gold Star tradition has reminded all Americans of the men and women who have sacrificed their lives in the service of our Nation. During World War I homes, businesses, schools and churches displayed flags bearing a blue star for each service member serving in harm's way. When a service member was killed in the line of duty, a gold star was stitched over the blue one on the flag in his or her home. From this simple expression of community solidarity, the Gold Star Mothers – an organization comprised of mothers who have lost a son or daughter in the service of our Nation – was born.

Being a Gold Star Mother is a distinction that no mother wants. But, in the face of their unimaginable personal sorrow, the women of the Gold Star Mothers inspire us all through their grace and selflessness. Their commitment, courage and constant vigilance ensure that America does not forget the sacrifice of its fallen sons and daughters.

The United States Congress has designated the last Sunday in September as "Gold Star Mother's Day." It is celebrated this year on September 28-29 with a number of events scheduled in Washington, D.C. Over this weekend, we will pause to commemorate the continued service of the Gold Star Mothers – women who have been forever changed through the sacrifice of their children.

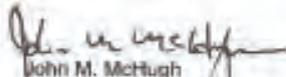
The Gold Star Mothers, as well as all Family members who bear the enormous burden of loss, will always be cherished members of our great Army Family. We maintain our commitment to support these Families while honoring the legacy of our fallen Soldiers.



Raymond F. Chandler, III
Sergeant Major of the Army



Raymond T. Odierno
General, United States Army
Chief of Staff



John M. McHugh
Secretary of the Army

THE OUTPOST

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Students get unique look at YPG training

By Mark Schauer

Home to nine unique military working dog training courses, YPG is the premier location for handlers to train in desert conditions prior to deploying overseas. Two students from suburban Phoenix were recently given an up-close look at one of the training courses for a school project.

The students are learning about working dogs in preparation for a project they will enter in the National History Day competition, in which more than 500,000 American primary and secondary students undertake projects relating to a common theme. Winners of a statewide competition proceed to the national competition. This year's theme is 'rights and responsibilities.'

"I don't think a lot of the kids

who do this go to the extent that we do," said Stacey Trepanier, teacher at New Vistas Center for Education in Chandler, Ariz. "I'm really all about the experiences that comes along."

The students, eighth grader Kira Armoogan and sixth grader Grant Trepanier, received briefings from several of the course's instructors, including reminisces of their deployments overseas, before being taken on a tour of the mock Middle Eastern village used for training and witnessing a demonstration of some of the working dogs' capabilities.

"The kids are doing a project many kids don't do," said Staff Sgt. Scott Chiridon, course chief of the Marine Corps Inter-service Advanced K9 Skills course. "They're putting extra effort into their school work,

SEE **DOGS** page 4



Though trained to detect explosives, military working dogs are also tenacious at bringing down opponents with powerful bites, as seen here. Two students from suburban Phoenix were recently given an up-close look at one of the training courses at YPG for a school project.

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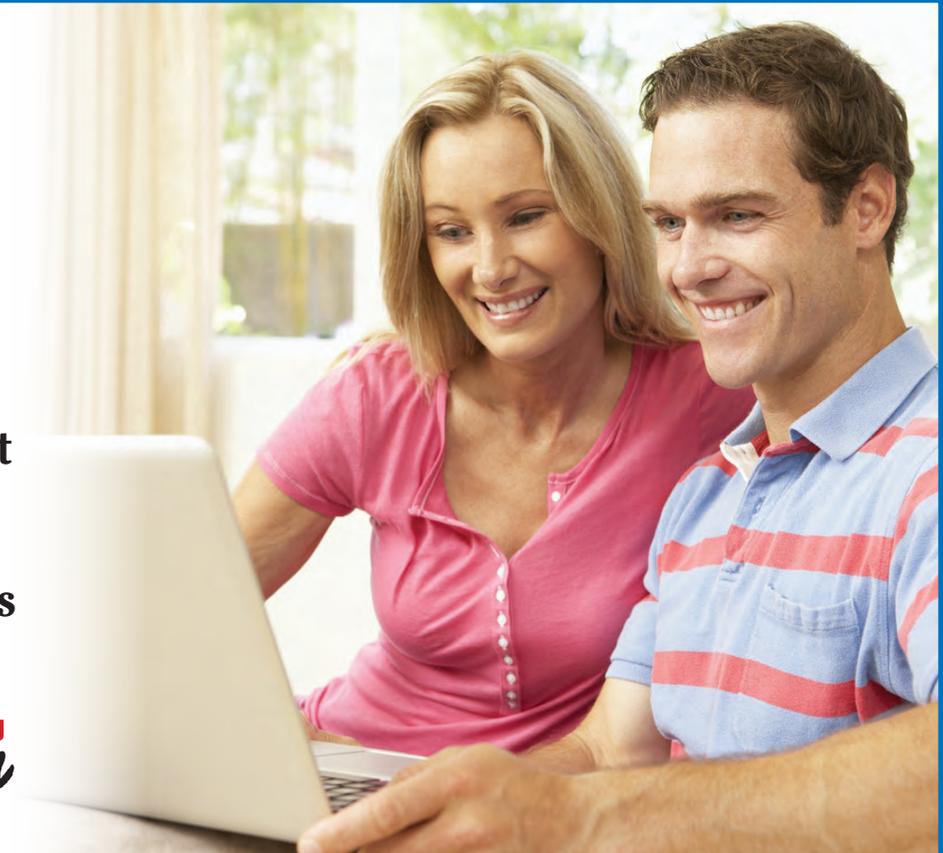
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New lawyer boost YPG's legal team

The recent arrival of attorney Karen Lloyd has enabled YPG's Command Judge Advocate's Office to once again offer the full range of Army legal assistance services. These client and preventive law services include guidance and advice in the areas of family law, real property (including landlord-tenant), economic and consumer matters, estate planning, and income tax assistance. Opinions regarding applicability of provisions in the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) or Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) are also available.

In general, eligible legal assistance

patrons include active duty military, military dependents and military retirees. Reserve component members are also eligible for legal assistance on a limited basis, generally immediately before and after mobilization. In some limited circumstances, DoD civilian employees and contractors may be eligible for legal assistance, as when being deployed or assigned overseas in support of U.S. Armed Forces. The Command Judge Advocate's Office offers notary services, and YPG civilian employees not otherwise eligible for legal assistance may also take advantage of this service.

Lloyd comes with a broad and diverse background. She has

worked in private practice, and in positions at the federal, state, and local government levels. She has practiced primarily in the areas of criminal, maritime, administrative, and environmental law. However, she says that "providing legal assistance to service members and their families has been one of the most satisfying aspects of my career, and I look forward to doing that once again here at Yuma Proving Ground."

Lloyd is a former Navy air traffic controller and retired Coast Guard officer with a primary specialty in law and sub-specialty in marine safety/maritime security. In addition to legal assistance services, she provides

government ethics advice to military, civilian employees and management personnel, oversees the processing of small/local claims, and handles other administrative law matters.

Hours of operation for the Command Judge Advocate's Office are posted on the YPG Intranet and Internet sites. Those needing legal assistance should call to make an appointment. Legal assistance appointments for general law matters are available on Mondays and Tuesdays. Emergency legal assistance will be provided on an as-needed basis. For more information regarding services or eligibility, or to schedule an appointment, call 328-2608.

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Staff Sgt. Scott Chirdon (left), course chief of the Marine Corps Inter-service Advanced K9 Skills course, shows the students a sleeve used in military working dog training at YPG.

DOGS

FROM PAGE 3

so I wanted to give them as much information as I could to help their project and get the word out about what we do and how much we care about the dogs and students."

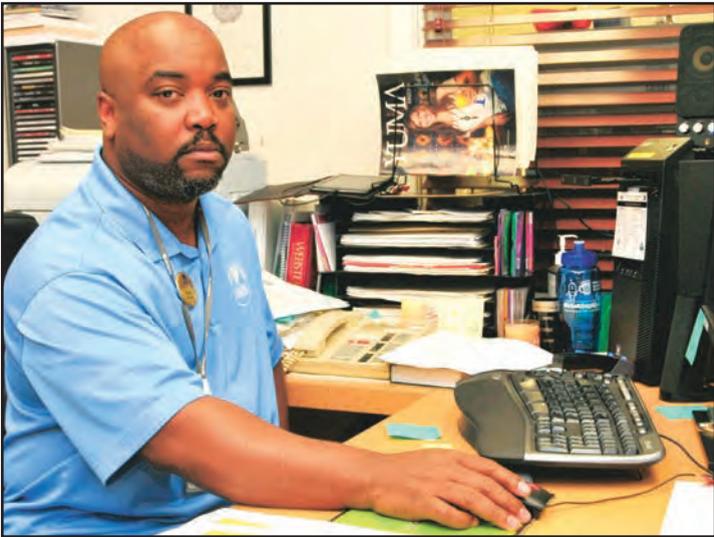
Both students were impressed by what they saw.

"I think it's awesome," said Armoogan. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime thing, and it's just amazing to look at all of this."

"It's really cool," agreed Grant. "The dogs kind of scared me at first, but the handlers are awesome."

YPG SPOTLIGHTS

Deidric (Rick) Cave



Rick Cave is available at bldg. 501 or can be reached by calling 328-2324.

By Yolie Canales

The Army's Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) program offers those who have been victims of sex crimes a way to be heard, as well as to report incidents that do occur.

At Yuma Proving Ground, Deidric (Rick) Cave, SHARP Victim Advocate, provides comprehensive assistance and liaison to military victims of sexual assault and sexual harassment, in addition to providing advocacy and educational services primarily to Army personnel and Department of Defense civilians.

Cave, an Army retiree who served more than 20 years, enlisted in the military in 1988 as a Pershing II Missile Systems Electronics Maintainer and later reclassified as a Visual Information Systems Maintainer. He retired as a Broadcast Engineer for American Forces

Network Korea in April 2009.

A native of Washington, D.C., Cave said he decided to join the Army for the simple reason of moving from the District of Columbia area. He reports no regrets.

Having arrived at YPG in June 2013, he stated, "I had been applying for SHARP positions throughout the nation," he said. "YPG made me a firm offer, and I took it." Cave, married to Andrea Geer (currently still in Korea), has two sons, Deidric Jr., 21, and DeAndre, 19.

He said that the best advice he received in life was, you're never too old to go to college. "I did just that," said Cave, "and received my Bachelor's degree, 20 years after completing high school."

In his spare time, Cave enjoys fishing, target shooting, taking photos, riding motorcycles, and home brewing beer. He also said that he would someday like to go on vacation in Thailand.



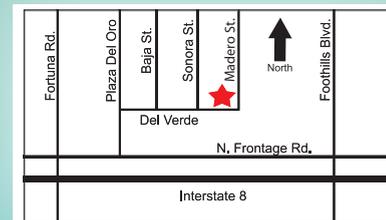
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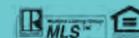
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YPG enables Super Bowl-caliber training to take place

By Mark Schauer

Six police officers with long guns and a German Shepherd working dog are in a two tight stacks against the walls on both sides of a door in a dim, stultifying house.

They entered without resistance and have cornered an armed suspect, barricaded behind the door of a back room. They believe he is alone, but are keenly aware that they could be wrong.

“This is my final warning!” the officer at the front of the stack shouts. “Come out now or I’ll send the dog!” “Get out of my house!” the man yells back.

An officer opens the door with a blow from a hand-held battering ram and shoves a couch away, allowing the working dog to bound into the room and down the suspect with a leaping bite to his elbow.

“Get off! Get off!” he yells as human officers pour in and handcuff him.

The downed suspect is actually a police officer wearing a padded bite suit, one of the members of the Yuma Police Department’s Special Enforcement Team (SET) using an urban training facility at YPG for intense instruction in how to forcefully and safely end a standoff. The training is dynamic and realistic, enough so to make the proving ground’s isolation a coveted asset.

“We get high value training in a vacant house or if a business owner offers us a building, but sometimes it causes the neighborhood to believe a live event is going on,” said Jeff Ruby, senior SET sergeant. “The facilities out here offer a great training environment, along with the added benefit of not worrying the public that this is a live event.”

Whereas most military installations focus on training combat forces, YPG’s primary mission is testing equipment in the Army’s ground combat arsenal. But the proving



(PHOTOS BY MARK SCHAUER)

The Yuma Police Department’s Special Enforcement Team (SET) recently undertook realistic training at YPG, spending an entire day practicing building entries and hostage rescues. It was the police department’s first visit in two years, and the organization is looking forward to additional training events at the proving ground in the future.

ground also hosts training for both military units and civilian law enforcement agencies, including the Yuma County Sheriff’s Office, the Arizona Department of Public Safety, and the United States Bureau of Customs and Border Protection. YPG has several large facilities that simulate urban environments, and the ones used primarily for training are specially designed for hard use. There

are no exposed nails or other hazards that could injure people running inside, for example.

“The buildings out here are similar to residential structures we encounter on call-outs in real situations,” said Detective Ernie Rangel, a member of the SET. “That makes it easier for us to train for a real situation. I know the layout of where we train normally; out here I don’t know the layout, so that

makes it better.”

Like the majority of SETs in the United States, the team’s members serve as a collateral duty to their regular positions within the department. Ruby says becoming a member of the team is a highly competitive process, open only to elite veterans of the force, and maintaining proficiency is an arduous, ongoing process.



“To use a sports analogy, the public wants a Super Bowl-caliber team to respond to their neighborhood for a suspect armed with an assault rifle,” said Ruby.

During their day at the proving ground, the SET members formed into groups that rotated between different training scenarios. The groups conducted tricky tactical entrances in which each officer had to step into

a dark building and secure the room while keeping eyes trained on the sight of their weapons -- constantly scanning for threats and not breaking formation or momentum. When maneuvering in cramped places in chaotic conditions, wounds from friendly fire are a distinct possibility, a reality that officers train to guard against. Though ready for the worst, Ruby says the decades-old SET

has successfully ended all but two standoffs without using deadly force.

“It’s kind of a stereotype that SET is going out there getting into a lot of shootings,” said Ruby. “Typically, it doesn’t happen that way because we have more options than the average patrol officer or deputy on the street.”

These other options include using tear gas and other chemicals, as well as less-lethal beanbag rounds and

sponge grenades.

YPG Training Exercise Management Office Chief Luis Arroyo was impressed by the size of the SET, and says the busy proving ground can easily accommodate them. “It’s fairly simple to support these groups. All they need is a piece of terrain to practice on, and our facilities are like nothing else in Yuma.”

“We’re looking forward to possibly using the firing ranges and live shoot house that they’ve offered to us,” added Ruby. “This is fabulous.”

YPG’s urban skills facilities give both military units and civilian law enforcement agencies high value training. Additionally, the proving ground’s isolation enables law enforcement to train dynamically without the public thinking an actual call is in progress.



Though ready for the worst, the decades-old YPD SET has successfully ended all but two standoffs without using deadly force. “It’s kind of a stereotype that SET is going out there getting into a lot of shootings,” said Sgt. Jeff Ruby. “Typically, it doesn’t happen that way because we have more options than the average patrol officer or deputy on the street.”

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VIEWPOINTS

The universe is a big place: are we the only living things in it? We asked members of the workforce, "Do you think there is life on other planets?"



Zach Woodward
Mail distribution clerk

As big as the universe is, I don't see why there wouldn't be life on other planets: It's kind of small-minded to think that we are it. I've watched enough sci fi, there has to be something more than us.



Melanie Barron
Housekeeper

I think there could be. The universe is so large and there are so many other planets, it is possible. Maybe there is someone on another planet asking the same question.



Rick Cave
Victim advocate

I find it hard to believe that as big as the universe is, we are the only life forms in it. There might be people wondering the same thing on some other third planet from a star just like our's.

'Prevent Kitchen Fires'

It's time for Fire Prevention Week, and from October 6-12, the YPG Fire Department is joining forces with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to remind local residents to "Prevent Kitchen Fires."

During this year's fire safety campaign, firefighters and safety advocates will be spreading the word about the dangers of kitchen fires, most of which result from unattended cooking and teaching local residents, how to prevent kitchen fires from starting in the first place.

According to the latest NFPA research, cooking is the leading cause of home fires. Two of every five home fires begin in the kitchen, more than any other place in the home. Cooking fires are also the leading cause of home fire-related injuries.

"Often when we're called to a fire that started in the kitchen, the residents tell

us that they only left the kitchen for a few minutes," said Fire Inspector Chuck Beasley. "Sadly, that's all it takes for a dangerous fire to start. Our hope is that Fire Prevention Week will help us reach folks in the community before they suffer a damaging lesson."

Among the safety tips that firefighters and safety advocates will be emphasizing:

- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, broiling, or boiling food.
- If you must leave the room, even for a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- When you are simmering, baking, or roasting food, check it regularly, stay in the home, and use a timer to remind you.
- If you have young children, use the stove's back burners whenever possible. Keep children and pets at least three feet away from the stove.
- When you cook, wear clothing with tight-fitting sleeves.
- Keep potholders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper and plastic bags, towels, and anything else that can burn, away from your stovetop.
- Clean up food and grease from burners and stovetops.



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SAFETY CORNER

Be cautious when driving on range roads

Submitted by Safety Office

Let's face it, we all get used to dealing with potentially dangerous situations while conducting and supporting test operations. After all, many of the items we work with every day are specifically designed to cause harm to the enemy. Our test leaders remind us daily of the potential hazards we could face once operations begin on-site, but it's easy to forget that every one of us could be confronted with a dangerous – even deadly – hazard before we get to the test site...driving on Yuma Proving Ground's range roads.

It's likely that all of us who have been working on the YPG ranges for a while have experienced wildlife on or near the roads. It's important for all of us to drive defensively and share the road with horses, burros and deer. If and when you see animals in the area, slow down and don't assume the animals will run away from your vehicle. All too often, a startled animal will dash straight into the roadway, leaving a driver with no way to avoid an impact. As conscientious drivers, we all want to do everything we possibly can to avoid an accident, therefore, the first reaction may be to swerve away from the animal. Unfortunately, this may lead to the losing control of the vehicle and the people involved into a worse situation. However, there will be times where avoidance is not a safe option for the driver, and the best course of action is simply to take your foot off the accelerator, apply the brakes and allow the crash safety features engineered into your

vehicle to do what they were designed to do.

Even the best vehicle safety features – airbags, crumple zones, anti-lock brakes, etc. – won't keep you from getting seriously injured or killed in an accident if you're not wearing your seat belt. Seat belt use is mandatory on YPG and it's required off-duty in accordance with Arizona law.

Situational awareness is just as important as wearing a seat belt. Driving faster than the posted speed limit, driving too fast for the road and weather conditions, or operating a radio or phone while driving, can be as dangerous as wandering into an active firing fan. This is especially true during, dusk to dawn or when visibility is otherwise impaired by dusty conditions or rainfall. Even after the rain stops, driving on desert roads can be hazardous because running water in the desert washes occasionally cuts into road surfaces and leaves dangerous gullies where the road used to be. Most recently, after a heavy rain storm at YPG, an employee with several years of range experience was seriously injured when he lost control of his vehicle as drove into a portion of the road that had been washed out.

Always maintain a high level of situational awareness for your surroundings when driving. Watch out for animals and slow down in poor visibility conditions. After a rain storm, simply assume that there are probably washed out sections of the road and slow down accordingly. Remember our primary goal at Yuma Proving Ground... **NOBODY GETS HURT!!**

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It's FLU time again

Submitted by Maj. Leilani R. Davis,
YPG Health Clinic

It is that time again. Flu season is between October through May and peaks in January. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (June 2013), last season in the United States, there were 149 influenza-related pediatric deaths and 12,293 influenza type specific associated hospitalizations.

Every year, new types of flu vaccines are manufactured according to what the experts predict will be the most common during the upcoming season. This year, the vaccine's main component will prevent from specific flu virus Influenza A (both H1N1 and H3N2) and Influenza B. That is why it is very important to get vaccinated every season once it comes available. Even with recent vaccination, you may not be protected for this season.

Unlike the common cold virus, the influenza may come on suddenly. Flu-like symptoms include fever, fatigue, body aches, sore throat, nasal congestion, etc. It is a highly contagious disease that attacks the respiratory system (nose, throat, and lungs) and spread through physical contact (person-to-person or object-to-person). It may take up to a day before to feel any symptoms and continue to be infectious for up to seven days. So without knowing it, you may be passing it on even if you don't have any symptoms.

Vaccines prevent an individual by introducing the virus (dead or weakened) into the body. The body creates antibodies specific to the newly introduced vaccine which will protect the individual from the disease. Those with chronic respiratory illness may develop complications from the flu. Therefore, consider receiving the

pneumonia vaccine concurrently with the flu vaccine to include those 65 years or older.

The best way to prevent the flu is foremost proper hand washing to prevent the spread of the virus and annual vaccination. It may be contraindicated to receive the vaccine if there has been severe reaction to previous flu vaccine or severe egg/egg protein allergy. It is best to check with your primary care manager. Vaccines are now available at your local Military Treatment Facility (MTF), community pharmacy, or provider clinics.

PRIORITY

- Active Duty and Active Duty Family Members • Beneficiaries
- Department of Defense Healthcare Personnel • Retirees
 - **High Risk Population
 - **HIGH RISK POPULATION
 - Children ages 6-59 months
 - Adults >49 years
 - Pregnant women

- Chronic medical conditions (i.e. pulmonary, cardiovascular, diabetes, etc)

CONTRAINDICATIONS/ PRECAUTIONS

- Life threatening reaction to previous dose of vaccine
- Severe allergic reaction to eggs, egg protein, egg-containing foods
 - Aspirin therapy for children
- History of Gillian Barre Syndrome
- Administered LIVE vaccines within 28 days

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—CHAPLAIN'S CORNER—

Calm, cool and collected

Submitted by Chaplain (Maj.)
Douglas Thomison

Greetings Team YPG. Studies have shown that hot weather often equates to hot tempers. You may have heard the saying that there is "something in the air." Well, hot air temperature may cause us to be a little edgy, but it doesn't have to. If we know that we are more vulnerable when the weather is hot, we need to watch our physical and emotional temperature gauge.

Now, even though the weather is starting to mellow (just slightly), hot tempers still flare. And it seems many people are challenged with keeping their temper in check. If not controlled, anger can easily get out of hand, and gone out of control can cause broken relationships and lives. Proverbs 19:11 gives excellent advice to us. It says, "Good sense makes a man slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense." There are people we have all known who seem to feel that it was alright to be offended at the

slightest perceived hint of a negative comment. They could get upset even with the most innocent comment. I truly believe that our home and community life would be far better off if tempers, in any season, were slow to respond to perceived offenses.

How can we keep our tempers in check? First, employ the Golden Rule of "do unto to others as you would have done unto you" (treat people how you want to be treated). Second, find positive ways to let off steam. If someone upsets you, go take a walk, listen to uplifting music, and seek strength and peace from God. Finally, look for good in the other person. Often we are quick to project our own sentiments on others. You may also want to practice what James tells his listeners, "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19). You know, by putting into practice some of these techniques, we can stay calm, cool and collected in any season. Have a blessed day!

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