Japan Ministry of Defense recognizes Navy surgeon general

From Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs

TOKYO – The Navy Surgeon General was recognized by the Japan Ministry of Defense Aug. 9 for his work in supporting the Department of the Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) and for his contributions to improving global public health.

In a ceremony held at the Japanese Ministry of Defense headquarters, Japanese Adm. Masahiko Sugimoto, Chief of Staff for Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force presented Vice Adm. Adam M. Robinson Jr. with a letter of appreciation on behalf of Minister of Defense Toshimi Kitazawa. Robinson was the 55th person to receive such an honor in the Ministry of Defense's history.

Robinson was recognized for his contributions in improving the exchange and interoperability between medical commands of the Navy and JMSDF both in Japan and abroad. He was also thanked for his work during earthquake relief efforts, developing an extern program for JMSDF medical officers at U.S. Naval Hospitals in Japan and for his medical support to JMSDF personnel deployed to Djibouti.

"Thank you on behalf of the Japanese people for all your support following the earthquake," said Sugimoto. "Your medical support during your tour as the U.S. Navy's Surgeon General has helped not only the people of Japan, but the world."

Robinson said he was especially honored given his close ties with Japan following several tours in the country, including serving aboard the aircraft carrier USS Midway (CV 41) and at U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka.

"I am very honored to receive this recognition on behalf of the men and women of Navy Medicine," said Robinson. "I appreciate the true camaraderie, collegiality and friendship that exists between Navy Medicine, the U.S. Navy and the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force. The relationship we have with [the] JMSDF medical team has benefited both nations greatly and we look forward to our continued partnership."

As the Navy Surgeon General and Chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Robinson leads 63,000 Navy Medicine personnel who provide health care support to the Navy and Marine Corps, their families and veterans in high operational tempo environments, at expeditionary medical facilities, medical treatment facilities, hospitals, clinics, hospital ships and research units around the world.

Surgeon General of the U.S. Navy, Vice Adm. Adam M. Robinson, takes a question from a chief petty officer during an All Hands call during his visit to Fleet Activities Yokosuka June 4, 2010. Robinson, who served as U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka commanding officer from September 2001 to January 2004, was recognized by the Japan Ministry of Defense Aug. 9 for his work in supporting the Department of the Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) and for his contributions to improving global public health.

U.S. Navy Photo by MC2 Devon Dow

Doctors caution colon cleansers may clean body of nutrients

By MC3 Alexandra Snyder,
National Naval Medical Center Public Affairs

BETHESDA, Md. – Doctors at the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) encouraged Sailors to avoid using unhealthy measures, like colon cleansers, to meet physical standards Aug. 11.

While the manufacturers of these cleansers claim they help shed pounds and free the body of toxins, Capt. Brooks Cash, Chief of Medicine for NNMC and Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC), said these could potentially lead to severe health hazards.

"There is a belief that stool in your colon clogs like a pipe and occasionally needs cleaning out. That is a myth," said Cash.

Additionally, there is no evidence of improved health with colon cleansing and over-the-counter medicinal laxatives and enemas used to perform these "cleansings," said Cash, who is also Professor of Medicine at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. He added that such rituals can lead to dehydration and potentially deadly electrolyte abnormalities.

In reality, the food we eat is not stored for long periods within the body. It is broken down into one- to two-millimeter particles of basic sugars, fats and proteins in the stomach. It is then absorbed by the small intestine where it is used to nourish the body. The unusable particles are sent to the colon where water is reabsorbed to form solid stool. This waste is then expelled from the body, Cash explained.

"Humans have been around for a pretty long time," he added. "There is no reason to use colon cleansers when your body has adapted to do such a good job of that on its own."

Touting such benefits as weight loss, shinier hair and greater overall health with the removal of "toxins" that build up in consumers' digestive tract, colon cleansers come in the form of pills, powders to be mixed with liquid and enemas.

However, reading the fine print on the labels of these "ultimate colon cleansers" reveals such common side effects as nausea, vomiting, intestinal cramping, drowsiness and fatigue.

"There are numerous reports that these cleansers, especially the high colonics, have caused direct harm to patient's bodies, such as infections, colonic perforation, and even death," said Lt. Cmdr. Ruben Acosta, staff gastroenterologist and an assistant professor of medicine. "These types of injuries and infections are especially prevalent because the cleanse is performed by alternative practitioners who are not subject to the same safety or hygiene regulations that protect the patients who undergo standard medical procedures."

Cash added that colon cleanser manufacturers take advantage of people by capitalizing on their fears of being overweight, unattractive or unhealthy. To combat those issues and sustain health, he recommends patients eat fiber, maintain an ideal body weight, exercise, not smoke and use alcohol only moderately, if at all.

"Another critically important preventative measure to take is to begin colon cancer screening at the appropriate ages," said Cash.

According to Cash, the only common reason other than problematic, severe constipation to do a colon cleanse is in preparation for a colonoscopy or virtual colonoscopy, two of the colon cancer screening options offered by the Gastroenterology Service at NNMC.

Patients with no family history of colon cancer should begin screening at age 50, regardless of gender; African-Americans should start at age 45. Anyone with at least two grandparents or one parent or sibling who suffered from colon cancer should begin screening at age 40 or 10 years before the age the relative was diagnosed.

"Colon cancer is the third most common cause of cancer and the second most common cause of cancer death in the US; however, it is largely preventable." said Cash. "Screening needs to occur every five to 10 years, regardless of symptoms, as colon cancer is often silent until too late."

For more information about colon cancer screenings, contact your primary care manager.

Designer drug information Web site launched

From Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs

PORTSMOUTH, Va. – The Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center (NMCPHC) launched a designer-drug information website Aug. 9 to inform and educate Department of Navy personnel on the dangers of designer drug use.

According to Cmdr. Lisa McWhorter, NMCPHC Navy Drug Program Manager, the webpage page is intended to provide a "one-stop-shopping" resource for visitors to the website and includes downloadable presentations and links to other drug-related websites.

"We're hopeful that visitors to our website will find this site useful for what they need either through the presentations or the links," said McWhorter. "Education and awareness of the negative effects from the use of these drugs, plays a key role in deterrence of drug use."

The available presentations are well-suited for commands throughout the Navy and Marine Corps to use for general military training and other training venues intended to reach a broad audience ranging from leadership to the deckplate Sailor and Marine.

McWhorter said NMCPHC will manage the website to ensure that current and accurate information is added as soon as it becomes available.

The timing of the webpage launch complements the Aug. 2 release of a Navy Medicine all-hands message. Navy Surgeon General Vice Adm. Adam M. Robinson, Jr. used this message to caution his commanding officers, medical providers and personnel on the negative health effects and legal consequences of using synthetic marijuana like Spice and other designer drugs.

"It is paramount all Navy Medicine personnel are aware of the adverse health effects of these drugs," said Robinson. "Serious side effects have been reported after its use including tremors, panic attacks, delirium, impaired coordination, seizures, paranoid hallucinations, and psychotic symptoms that can last for days, even months in some cases."

The NMCPHC webpage and leadership message provide background information on Spice and other synthetic designer drugs, including varieties, signs and symptoms of use and the negative health effects associated with use. It also increases emphasis on Zero Tolerance for possession and trafficking as well as the use of designer drugs. In the past year, hundreds of Sailors have been held accountable for use or possession of Spice or Spice derivatives. Service members can also be charged as part of the Zero Tolerance policy for failure to report an incident of abuse.

"The NMCPHC website will serve as an excellent resource to help commanding officers remain fully engaged in educating all hands on the hazards associated with synthetic drugs with a focus on spice in particular," said McWorter.

Information on designer drugs can be found at http://www.nmcphc.med.navy.mil/Healthy_Living/.