USNH Yokosuka laboratory renovations equal enhanced services

By Richard McManus,
USNH Yokosuka Public Affairs

U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Yokosuka recently completed renovations in its laboratory, bringing to a close, a three-month project to improve laboratory services.

"We incorporated a linear workflow design into the laboratory area," said Lt. Edgardo Guzman, the laboratory officer at USNH Yokosuka. "Basically, this means we looked at the instruments and equipment we use most often, reconfiguring them so laboratory staff members have better access to them creating less travel time between highly-used stations."

In a laboratory that processes more than 800 specimens a day from the hospital's core facility, eight branch clinics in mainland Japan, Korea and Diego Garcia and area ships, saving time traveling between stations means more samples can be processed.

The new laboratory area makes processing specimens more efficient, improves the accuracy of results and reduces human error. As part of the reconfiguration, the lab added a specimen drop off window to collect all incoming specimens in one location and separated the preparation and processing areas, which is an important safeguard against mislabeling samples.

The driving factor behind this renovation is that nearly 80 percent of the information used by physicians to make medical decisions comes from the clinical laboratory, therefore accuracy and reliable results are imperative for better patient care.

USNH Yokosuka HMCS Leopoldo Andico, HN Devin Brown and Commanding Officer Capt. Kevin Moore, take part in a cake-cutting ceremony celebrating National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week April 19. The celebration was held in conjunction with a ribbon cutting which unveiled the newly renovated USNH Yokosuka laboratory.

Photo by Tom Watanabe

"A patient dropping off a specimen or getting blood drawn may not see many changes, but behind-the-scenes the lab has been transformed," said Hospitalman 3rd Class Brian Lynn, who is a laboratory technician for USNH Yokosuka. "Where the patient will see the difference is the shorter time it takes for results to come back. Sometimes waiting for these results, or having to get retested because of an error, can be stressful and we're happy to be able to alleviate that stress a little."

Although it is relatively simple for patients to drop off specimens, once the samples are in the lab's hands a thorough, verification and testing process takes place. After the specimen has been received, the laboratory confirms that the proper sample is being tested. After confirmation, the specimen is then labeled and prepared for testing.

Depending on what type of test is ordered, just preparing the sample can be a lengthy process. Once it is ready to be tested, a combination of technicians, computers and machines analyze the sample and then results are verified and documented. Now, the result is on its way to the provider, so the results can be shared with the patient.

Thanks to the new streamlined environment, laboratory specimen processing will now be available to clinicians and their patients more quickly.

Visitors to Yokosuka may not be eligible for medical services

By Lora Sanders-VanNoy,
TRICARE Pacific Representative

Military treatment facilities (MTF) are not public facilities and only those who are entitled to and properly registered in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) are eligible for care. If you have a friend or relative visiting you in Japan who is not registered in DEERS they are not eligible for medical services at USNH Yokosuka.

It is highly recommended that your guests verify that their current insurance plan will reimburse for outpatient and inpatient services received outside of the continental United States prior to coming to Japan. If there is no such coverage, your guests should obtain the appropriate travel health insurance.

Additionally, the pharmacy at USNH Yokosuka is also only available to those that are entitled and registered in DEERS. Ensure your visitors plan ahead and have an adequate supply of medication for the duration of their visit. USNH Yokosuka Pharmacy does not sell medication. If medication refills are needed while visiting, your guest will have to utilize a host nation pharmacy.

Host nation facilities do not bill U.S. insurance companies nor do they offer payment plans. Payment in full in the local currency is expected at the time services are rendered, for pharmacy needs or upon discharge from inpatient services. Credit card payments are not always an option at host nation facilities or pharmacies, so ensure your guests are aware and have cash available.

Exceptions for care at USNH Yokosuka may be made for emergencies. However, your guests will be billed for the care rendered in the emergency room. If treated at USNH Yokosuka for an emergency and follow up care is required, your guests will have to seek care at a host nation facility.

As a reminder, the cost of emergent care at USNH Yokosuka and, or any host nation facility, to include host nation pharmacies, is the sole responsibility of the guest and, or the sponsor for that guest.

For more information on travel health insurance options, visit https://www.travelex-insurance.com/home/aspx or pick up a Visitors and Financial Responsibility brochure at the USNH Yokosuka reception desk.

Navy Medicine puts FOCUS on building resiliency for families

By Valerie A. Kremer,
Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Public Affairs

Wartime deployment takes a toll on both the service member and family members on the home front with multiple deployments often compounding existing stress.

Post traumatic stress, other mental health conditions and physical injuries in a military parent are likely to disrupt family roles, sources of care and instrumental support.

To meet this challenge, Navy Medicine developed Project FOCUS (Families OverComing Under Stress) to serve the growing need of military families and children.

FOCUS is a family-centered resiliency training program based on evidence-based interventions that enhances understanding, psychological health and developmental outcomes for highly stressed children and families. In January 2009, the BUMED Family Programs Division was stood-up under the Deployment Heath Directorate in the Wounded, Ill, and Injured Warrior Support Command of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) and now oversees FOCUS training.

"Project FOCUS is unprecedented within Department of Defense medical commands," said Kirsten Woodward, director of Family Programs Division, BUMED. "A family programs division has never been established," Woodward added. "It has responded to the importance of family readiness and preparedness through unprecedented programming that Navy Medicine has to offer."

FOCUS is an eight-week, skill-based, trainer-led, program that addresses difficulties families may have when facing the challenges of multiple deployments and parental combat-related psychological and physical health problems.

The program provides structured activities to bridge gaps in shared family understanding that may follow stressful experiences and separations. FOCUS uses family training techniques to highlight areas of strength and resilience in the family and promote family growth to help address daily challenges.

Today, there are nearly two million American children with a parent serving in the military and approximately 900,000 children and youth with one or both parents deployed multiple times. Continued and repetitive deployments can have a psychological impact on family functioning according to research. In the past five years, there has been an increase in both inpatient and outpatient behavioral health admissions for children.

"For the kids, learning 'hands on' with different skills and activities [was significant]." The feeling thermometer was great. For the adults having a place to talk with someone about challenges or issues going on is important," a FOCUS family member said.

In both group and individual family service settings, family members are taught skills to improve emotional regulation, problem solving, goal setting and communication.

"The trainer's ability to help each of us see situations from each other's vantage points as parents, teenagers and children [was helpful]. I feel we gained valuable insights and tools, and ended up with more acceptable expectations and understanding," said another FOCUS participant.

Notably, program participation has resulted in statistically significant increases in family and child positive coping and significant reductions in parent and child distress over time, suggesting longer-term benefits for military family wellness.

Visit the Web site www.focus.org for more information.

Navy launches blog

By Defense Media Activity

The Navy launched its official blog April 22 at http://navylive.dodlive.mil with an inaugural post by the Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable Ray Mabus.

"In the ten months I have served as secretary, I've had the opportunity to travel to many of our ships, stations and Marine units around the world and I've met tens of thousands of Sailors and Marines," said Mabus in his blog post. "At every command, I am constantly inspired by the courage, professionalism, dedication to duty, and commitment to our country demonstrated by every Sailor and Marine."

The Navy Live blog, hosted on the DoD Live blog hosting service, was launched to be a platform for talking about issues and important matters confronting the Department of the Navy.

"It will provide an opportunity for the senior leadership of the Secretariat and the Navy to communicate directly with both the Navy and the public at large, without having to resort to the formality of a naval message or press release," said Mabus.

The blog is intended to tell the Navy story through the voices of both leadership and deck plate Sailors.

For a listing of all Navy social media sites or to register your command site, go to www.navy.mil/socialmedia.