USNH Yokosuka scheduled to receive influenza vaccine soon

By Ben Avey, USNH Yokosuka Public Affairs

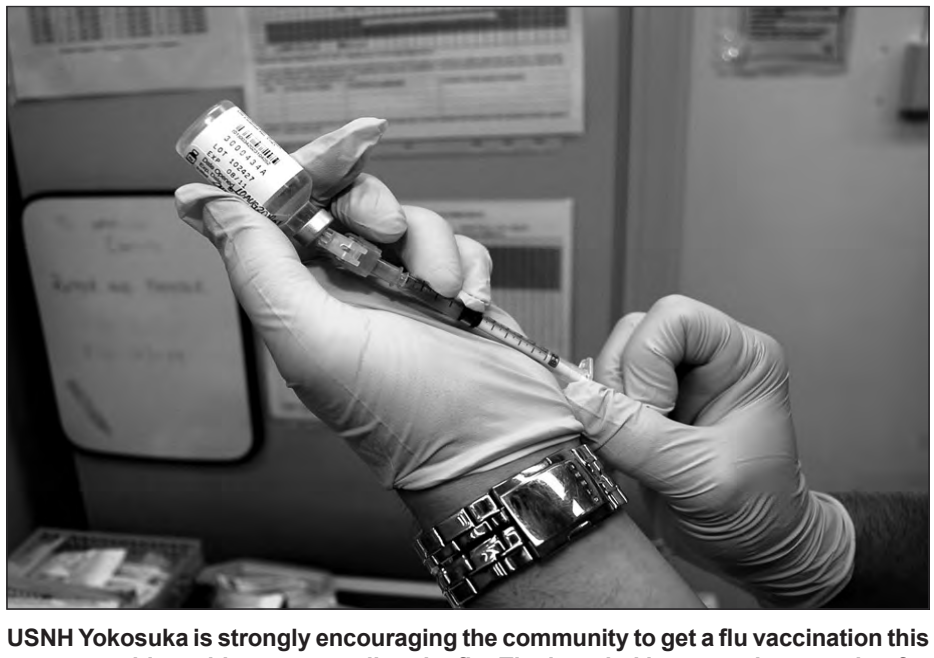
With flu season fast approaching, U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Yokosuka is urging the Yokosuka community to take precautions and get vaccinated to prevent the spread of influenza this year. Influenza or "flu" is a serious and sometimes life threatening illness which hospitalizes more than 200,000 people a year in the United States.

Vaccination remains the best method to prevent both catching and spreading the flu. Since last year, the vaccine has been improved and now includes protection against the two most common strains of seasonal influenza as well as the novel H1N1 virus.

"We all play a part in keeping the community healthy by taking action to keep ourselves healthy," said USNH Yokosuka Director for Public Health Cmdr. Paul Brochu. "Flu vaccination is a proven and time tested way to prevent the spread of flu. By getting immunized, you're not just protecting yourself; you're protecting your family and the community at large… I can't stress enough the importance of getting immunized."

USNH Yokosuka is scheduled to receive the vaccine shipment soon and will announce the schedule for mass immunization clinics shortly after receipt. The clinics will vaccinate active duty shore-based Sailors, emergency personnel, U.S. government employees and eligible family members. The hospital does not expect availability issues like those experienced last fall in some parts of the United States and Japan with the H1N1 vaccine.

"Our goal is to vaccinate every Navy-eligible beneficiary who wants to be vaccinated and we have ordered accordingly," said Brochu. "We expect to have adequate supplies."



USNH Yokosuka is strongly encouraging the community to get a flu vaccination this year to avoid catching or spreading the flu. The hospital is currently preparing for the upcoming flu season and will announce the dates of this year's flu immunization clinics in Yokosuka and at the branch clinics shortly after the shipment arrives.

Photo by Richard McManus

The vaccine will be available and administered in both the nasal spray FluMist® and the traditional "flu shot." The "flu shot" is an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle, usually in the arm. FluMist® is made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu and is approved for use in healthy people 2 to 49 years of age who are not pregnant. Most beneficiaries between ages 2 and 49 will receive the Flumist® unless the person does not qualify due to an allergy or medical condition.

In addition to getting vaccinated, there are other steps each and every person can take to prevent the spread of germs and viruses, which are effective in preventing the spread of both the seasonal and H1N1 influenza viruses.

• Avoid close contact with people who are sick, when you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

• If possible, stay home from work, school and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.

• Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.

• Wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer often to help protect you from germs.

• Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.

To learn about influenza, the vaccine and its benefits, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at http://www.cdc.gov/flu.

Philippine navy chaplain performs Mass aboard *USS Cowpens*

By Lt. j.g. Maxwell Schmidt, *USS Cowpens* Public Affairs

Roman Catholic Sailors of *USS Cowpens* (CG 63) experienced a unique opportunity to attend a Mass onboard the ship conducted by a Philippine navy chaplain. The service took place on a Sunday afternoon while at anchorage during the *Cowpens'* port visit to Manila as part of the *George Washington* Strike Group.

The chaplain conducting the Mass was Philippine navy Capt. Jose Abiera Jr., who serves as the chaplain of the Philippine Marine Corps.

"It has been an honor for me to be here and it is an honor to serve a group of men and women who have faithfully answered the call to not only their God, but also to their country and navy, men and women who protect both their own fellow citizens, as well as many others throughout the world," said Abiera.

Confession took place in the Chaplain's Office prior to the Mass, which was held in the ship's Learning Media Resource Center, a library-classroom that often doubles as a sanctuary for divine services and Bible studies throughout the week.

"This was a very special opportunity, and I was grateful that I was able to participate," said Master Chief Fire Controlman Howard Forsythe, of the Sailors in attendance. "Services like this show that there is a fellowship that surpasses the boundaries man has often put into place."

Escorted by the *Cowpens* Command Chaplain Lt. Kermit Jones, Jr., Abiera was also accompanied by his acolyte, a civilian, and sacristan, an enlisted Sailor. The service was conducted using a field kit, which is a bag often carried by chaplains containing all the necessary items to perform a Mass or divine service.

"Part of my job is to facilitate divine services for my Sailors onboard who have different faith perspectives from my own," said Jones. "I also try to afford them unique opportunities to worship with other believers of their faith, to include chaplains from other services, and in this case, nations. It demonstrates that faith can help build bridges across cultural divides."

"I had an opportunity to talk to Father Abiera prior to the Mass, and I was pleasantly surprised to find that he was also a fellow brother and second degree knight of The Knights of Columbus," said Forsythe, who is a first degree knight and is currently serving as the deputy grand knight of Yokosuka Council 12488.

Sailors attend a Mass conducted onboard *USS Cowpens* (CG 63) by Philippine navy Capt. Jose Abiera, chaplain of the Philippine Marine Corps, Sept. 7. The service took place while at anchorage during the ship's port visit to Manila as part of the *George Washington* Strike Group.

U.S. Navy photo by Lt. Kermit Jones

"It is my hope that this example of international partnering serves as an encouragement for others to reach beyond their current resources to demonstrate the Navy Chaplain Corps' goal of 'cooperation without compromise,'" Jones added.

The editor asks:

"***Did you know***, In the U.S. military, official identification tags, nicknamed 'dog tags' because of their resemblance to actual dog tags, go back as far as World War I?

"They were first prescribed in the Navy by then Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels in General Order No. 294, May 12, 1917. A single tag with an etched print of the right index finger on one side and U.S.N. stamped and the individual's personal information etched on the other side.

"The tags were, apparently, not used in the years after World War I. Navy regulations and the Bureau of Naval Personnel(BUPERS) Manual of 1925 provided that, 'in time of war or other emergency, or when directed by competent authority, individual identification tags shall be prepared and worn by all persons in the naval service.'

"With the onset of World War II, the Navy reinstated the use of the tags, directing that each officer and enlisted man of the Navy and naval reserve be issued an identification tag. The face of each tag was to bear the individual's name; officer rank or enlisted service number; blood type; if vaccinated for tetanus, the letter "T" with date in numerals (e.g., 8/40); and service (USN, USMC, USNR, USMCR). A right index fingerprint was etched on the reverse. As World War II went on, BUPERS prescribed the use of a second tag, individually suspended by a short length of chain so that one tag could be removed upon death or capture, leaving the other in place.

"Dimensions remained the same, but the etched fingerprint was omitted. Markings consisted of name; officer file number, or enlisted service number; blood type; date of tetanus inoculation; service; and religion, if desired by the service member: Catholic (C), Protestant (P) or "Hebrew" (H). When a service member was buried, ashore or at sea, one tag was to be left with the body and the other sent to BUPERS as soon as practicable under the circumstances.

"Post-World War II tags were worn on a bead chain, with an attached short loop for the second tag. Markings consisted of name (surname, followed by initials); service number; service; blood type; and religion, if desired by the individual."