Yokosuka religious program specialists celebrate anniversary

Story and photo by MC2 Byron C. Linder,
Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Yokosuka-based Sailors in the religious ministries community gathered Jan. 13 to celebrate the 31st anniversary of the religious program specialist (RP) rating with a cake-cutting ceremony at the Chapel of Hope on board Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka.

The ceremony provided the opportunity to reflect on the 31 years of service of the RP community. On Jan. 15, 1979, Rear Adm. John J. O'Connor, then chief of Navy chaplains, justified the importance for the Navy and Marine Corps team to employ enlisted religious ministry support professionals and formally established the RP rating.

Lt. Bruce Vaughan, one of the chaplains assigned to the Chapel of Hope, explained the myriad of skills the RP is required to have.

"The RP brings a lot to the table; administrative skills, office management skills, bookkeeping skills for offering funds, and that's just for a chapel," Vaughan said. "They have to be a jack-of-all-trades setting up the logistics for a religious service. Each chaplain has a different denominational background and the RP has to know the expectations and requirements for that chaplain and service. The RP has to be a war fighter. The RP is the bodyguard in combat for the chaplain. So there's a wide variety of skill-sets to succeed. We can't do our job without them. They support us every single day, and these events are a great way to say thank you for their service."

The forward-deployed RP community in Japan is represented by multiple commands. Religious Programs Specialist Seaman Blayne Benavente, a San Diego native assigned to the guided-missile cruiser *USS Shiloh* (CG 67), explained the importance of communication between the different commands to succeed.

"I'm still new to the rate, but there's been a very solid support structure with the chaplains and senior RPs from around base," said Benavente.

Commander U.S. Naval Forces Japan Force RP Chief Religious Programs Specialist (SW/FMF) Alan Dagg, from Medford, Ore., emphasized the importance of recognizing a Navy rating's anniversary.

"I think each rate should pause on their anniversary and reflect on their history and heritage. It instills pride, and that's an important element we need as Sailors, to realize where we come from and reflect on those who came before us," Dagg said.

RPSN Blayne Benavente, a San Diego native assigned to the guided-missile cruiser *USS Shiloh* (CG 67) and RPC Alan Dagg, a Medford, Ore., native assigned to CNFJ, cut the cake celebrating the 31st anniversary of the Religious Program Specialist rating at CFAY Chapel of Hope Jan. 13.

"We've gone through some tough times, just like every Navy rate has, so it's good to come together and talk about those issues we have in common and to fellowship and strengthen our camaraderie. I've gotten to know a lot more about my fellow RPs today, and my job as the force RP is to bring everyone together and accomplish our mission as effectively and efficiently as possible," added Dagg.

Host nation dental care for TRICARE Dental Program members

By Lora Sanders-VanNoy,
TRICARE Pacific Marketing Representative

Having dental insurance is important no matter where you are stationed in the world. In the event that military dental clinics do not have immediate appointment availability or the capability to treat, active duty family members (ADFM) enrolled in the TRICARE Dental Program (TDP) can utilize a host nation dentist for care and seek reimbursement.

TDP is affordable, portable and flexible dental coverage offered to ADFM. It is administered through United Concordia Companies, Inc., (UCCI), which offers comprehensive dental coverage when using civilian or host nation dentists.

Effective in January, monthly premiums will be $12.69 for the single plan (one family member) or $31.72 for the family premium (more than one family member). Upon initial enrollment, once the first month's premium and a completed enrollment form are received and processed, the monthly premium will then be deducted from the active duty service member's (ADSM) pay every month and will be reflected in the deductions column of the ADSM Leave and Earnings Statement (LES). The ADFM will also receive a TDP card in the mail reflecting the effective date of coverage.

The U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka Dental Clinic will see command sponsored ADFMs on a space available basis. When space is not available or the dental treatment needs cannot be met, command sponsored ADFMs may be referred to host nation dentists. If the ADFM is enrolled in the TRICARE Dental Program, they will be able to seek reimbursement after dental treatment is rendered through UCCI. Host nation dentists will require payment in full at the time of service. Without TDP coverage, 100 percent of the fees associated with host nation dental care will be the sole responsibility of the ADSM.

When using a host nation dentist, proper procedure must be followed in order to ensure claims for dental care can be processed promptly. For services such as diagnostic, preventative, basic restorative, endodontic or periodontic, ADFMs should visit the dental representative at the TRICARE Service Center to pick up a TDP OCONUS claim form to take with them to the host nation dentist. The dentist portion of the form must be completed by the dentist, in English, outlining the procedures performed. The ADFM will need to complete the patient portion, sign and date. ADFMs should then return the completed form to the dental representative to be sent to UCCI for processing.

For orthodontic and implant services, ADFMs must first obtain a Non-Availability Referral Form from the dental clinic. ADFMs will then be directed to the TRICARE Service Center to speak with the dental representative for information regarding the approval and procedural process prior to receiving the care. For orthodontic and implant services, approval must first be obtained before any care is received in order to be eligible for reimbursement and payment for services. Orthodontic or implant care that is rendered without prior approval will not be considered for payment or reimbursement and would be the sole responsibility of the active duty service member sponsor.

For more information regarding the TRICARE Dental Program and procedures for host nation dental care, call the TRICARE Service Center at 243-5509.

The Chief says:

"Did you know, in February 1944, the Navy commissioned its first African-American naval officers?

"This long-hoped-for action represented a major step forward in the status of African-Americans in the Navy and in American society.

"The 12 commissioned officers and one warrant officer who received his rank at the same time, came to be known as the "Golden Thirteen. They are:

- Ensign James E. Hare
- Ensign Samuel E. Barnes
- Ensign George C. Cooper
- Ensign William S. White
- Ensign Dennis D. Nelson
- Ensign Graham E. Martin
- Ensign Phillip G. Barnes
- Ensign Reginald E. Goodwin
- Ensign John W. Reagan
- Ensign Jesse W. Arbor
- Ensign Dalton L. Baugh
- Ensign Frank E. Sublett
- Warrant Officer Charles B. Lear

"If you didn't know, now you know." – MCC(SW/AW) Eric Hannah, CFAY Public Affairs.

USNH Yokosuka to hold medical alliance patient satisfaction focus groups Feb. 22-23

By Jennifer Savage,
USNH Yokosuka Public Affairs

Representatives from the Western Pacific Medical Alliance will be conducting patient satisfaction focus groups at member hospitals U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Guam, USNH Yokosuka, and USNH Okinawa during the month of February.

Focus groups for Yokosuka will be held at the USNH Yokosuka Feb. 22- 23.

The purpose of the focus groups is to determine the following:

- Areas in which the hospital excels
- Areas in which the hospital can improve
- What is important to our patients

The medical alliance is a collaboration formed by USNH Guam, Yokosuka and Okinawa to identify efficient, patient-centered solutions for operational healthcare support.

A primary reason for the establishment of the medical alliance was to find solutions to the issues encountered due to the physical distance of the three hospitals from the continental United States, such as long medical evacuation missions, to deliver patients to a higher level of care.

The intent of the medical alliance, through the respective hospitals, is to collaborate and combine resources to deliver the finest health services in the world to America's warriors and their families – those who currently serve, those who have served, and the family members who support them.

Focus groups will be conducted in an informal "round table" discussion format.

Participation is open to active duty personnel and their family members as well as retirees and their family members. Prior registration is required, and seats are limited. Focus group meetings will not be open to the media or the general public.

Contact the USNH Yokosuka Customer Relations Office at 243-8627 or by e-mail to customer@med.navy.mil for more information or to participate in the focus groups.

Deadline for registration is Feb. 17.