Japanese medical interns break new ground with team training

By Ben Avey, USNH Yokosuka Public Affairs

Japanese medical interns, who are learning the United States approach to medical care during a one year internship at U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Yokosuka, broke new ground as the first intern class to learn Team Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety (TeamSTEPPS) teamwork system April 9.

TeamSTEPPS was designed by the U.S. Department of Defense in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to improve the quality, safety and efficiency of health care. It has been utilized by the U.S. Navy for several years to standardize the methods by which personnel interact and communicate with each other regarding patient care.

According to Japan National Institute of Public Health representative and TeamSTEPPS Master Instructor Dr. Kenichiro Taneda, the relatively new system has gained international notoriety and is slowly being implemented by the medical community of his country.

"I think patient safety is an international issue," said Taneda. "Most medical accidents are due to problems with team issues. That fact makes [Japanese medical personnel] very interested in team training."

TeamSTEPPS training has been fully integrated into daily operations at USNH Yokosuka and is required training for all incoming personnel, according to USNH Yokosuka Commanding Officer Capt. Kevin Moore.

"We have found that the team medicine concept has improved the level of care we provide our patients," said Moore. "Whether they are working directly with patients or supporting those who do, TeamSTEPPS has improved our methods of communication and the way in which our team works together."

USNH Yokosuka invited Taneda to teach the TeamSTEPPS course for the interns to better implement a program initially designed for an American audience.

USNH Yokosuka Japanese interns study a Japanese language presentation with TeamSTEPPS instructor Dr. Kenichiro Taneda April 9. The interns are among the first Japanese medical providers to learn TeamSTEPPS teamwork and communication system that has been developed and utilized by American medical community to improve the quality, safety and efficiency of health care for patients.

Photo by Richard McManus

"The idea was [for the interns] to learn from someone who understands Japanese culture and the TeamSTEPPS communication methods and to marry them together," said USNH Yokosuka medical provider and Japanese Internship Program Coordinator Lt. Cmdr. Sean Skelton. "This will help our Japanese medical professionals communicate better with each other and the rest of the medical team."

The interns are among the first Japanese providers to learn the TeamSTEPPS system. Taneda is hopeful that the interns will become master instructors like him and help spread the program across the country for the sake of both Japanese and American patients.

"Sometimes [American] military hospitals in Japan send patients to Japanese hospitals, so [better] collaboration can facilitate safer and higher quality of care for patients," said Taneda.

Future intern classes will learn TeamSTEPPS as a part of their initial indoctrination training when they come on board each year.

"They already understand the Japanese way of thinking, so if they can understand our way of thinking better, then we think they can act better in their capacity," said Skelton.

The USNH Yokosuka internship program was founded in 1952 and has become a highly respected program for medical providers in Japan. Each year, six Japanese providers are selected to learn outpatient and inpatient medicine and assist as medical liaisons with host nation medical facilities. Interns complete rotations in internal medicine, pediatrics, family medicine, general surgery, and obstetrics and gynecology as well as a number of elective specialties.

USNH Yokosuka is the largest U.S. military treatment facility on mainland Japan and serves approximately 33,000 beneficiaries. A 47-bed core hospital in Yokosuka on the banks of Tokyo Bay is complimented by eight branch health clinics in Japan, Korea and Diego Garcia.

New Navy program help Sailors, family members get "ship shape"

By Ronald Bolton, USNH Yokosuka

Many of us really do need to lose a few pounds, boost our fitness level and put a serious bridle on our eating habits. However, doing that is not as easy as it might seem as we have seen with increasing rates of obesity and associated medical problems throughout the United States. To combat those trends the Navy has established a new program called Ship Shape.

Ship Shape is a weight management program approved by the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. This eight-week program is designed specifically to help active duty personnel meet the Navy body composition standards. On board Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka, the program is available to anyone who is eligible to receive services at U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Yokosuka. Priority access will be given to active duty Sailors who exceed or are in danger of exceeding the Navy body composition assessment standard. The program is provided through USNH Yokosuka Health Promotions Department located on the third floor of the James D. Kelly Fleet Recreation Center.

During each of the eight weekly sessions, participants will be instructed on a variety of topics such as weight management, healthy nutrition, physical activity and psychology of weight loss. Each session builds upon the lessons learned in previous meetings. The goal of Ship Shape is to provide the tools necessary for individuals to make long-term, healthy lifestyle changes which will enable them to better manage their weight.

Although Ship Shape is not mandatory, voluntary participation can serve to augment a command's fitness enhancement program. All command fitness leaders are encouraged to refer personnel with weight management issues to this comprehensive, science-based weight management program.

Active duty personnel interested in participating in Ship Shape will need a recommendation and referral from their command fitness leader. For all others who would like to participate in Ship Shape, simply contact the USNH Yokosuka Health Promotions Department at 243-9776 to make arrangements or for more information.

Missing PRIMS data can slow your promotion

By MCC(SW) Maria Yager,
Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs

Navy officials want to remind Sailors to include a review of their Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA) data in their selection board preparations.

"When the promotion list comes out, we scrub those names against PRIMS (Physical Readiness Information Management System). The vast majority of candidates have no problems," said Capt. Leo Falardeau, assistant commander, Navy Personnel Command (NPC) for career progression, referring to the Navy policy that requires Sailors to meet physical readiness standards in order to be promoted.

"As long as members have taken their PRT (Physical Readiness Test) and passed it then the promotion process can continue," said Falardeau. "If it is anything other than that, PRIMS is blank, the member is over body fat or failed the PRT, then we have a discrepancy."

Last year, the Chief of Naval Personnel announced in NAVADMIN 073/09 that PRIMS data would be reviewed as part of the promotion and advancement process beginning with fiscal year 2010 boards. Falardeau's team reviews post-selection board results against the PRIMS database for all officers slated for promotion. As a result, a small number of promotions have been delayed in cases where a discrepancy has been found.

"In most cases, their PRIMS data is blank and just needs to be updated. The discrepancy can be resolved fairly quickly," said Falardeau. "In other cases the member must pass the PFA or if the error is in the fitness report, the fitness report must be corrected before the Sailor may be promoted. In cases where the data cannot be immediately fixed the promotion is delayed."

"We send a formal letter informing the member that they are delayed," said Falardeau. "And the small numbers that have been withheld have been trending downward, which we attribute to the word getting out."

To date, this process has only applied to officers, but the fiscal year 2011 E8-E9 Selection Boards for Navy Reserve personnel, which convened March 1, was the first enlisted selection boards to undergo the same PRIMS review.

While command fitness leaders (CFL) are responsible for inputting PRIMS data after each cycle, Sailors are ultimately responsible for reviewing the information.

"It is very important that Sailors review their PRIMS account for accuracy," said Physical Readiness Program Director Bill Moore.

If a Sailor finds an error in PRIMS, the first step should be to contact their CFL. The command that input the data is responsible for correcting the record.

"The first course of recommended action is for that command to send the PRIMS program manager a correction request along with supporting documentation. If the command can't assist with the records correction, then the member can always submit to the Board for Corrections of Naval Records," said Moore.

Sailors can review their PRIMS data through BUPERS Online at https://www.bol.navy.mil.