



WRAIR West



Organizational Culture Studies

The U.S. Army Medical Research Directorate-West (MRD-W) is working with the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) on a series of studies examining the effects of organizational culture on unit climate, health and well-being, and performance. The first study was conducted during tank gunnery range qualifications with an Armor Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) this past winter in Poland and Germany during Operation Atlantic Resolve. Data collection included pre-, during, and post-training surveys, sleep actigraphy, crew after action review observations, and range qualification scores among a total of 74 tank crews.

Building on this initial study, the team is now focused on the next iteration which will follow another brigade from pre-deployment training throughout the entire operational life-cycle. This follow-on study aims to understand how individual (psychological) and group (social) level mechanisms interact to influence health and performance. This study will include multiple survey time points and actigraphy, as well as observer ratings and performance measures during combat training exercises at the National Training Center.

The results of these studies will inform future interventions, recognizing the influence of these individuals and group level dynamics on overall team readiness and performance.

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Director's Corner



MAJ Matt LoPresti

It has been a productive spring and summer as we transition into a busy fall schedule. This issue of the MRD-W newsletter focuses on some of our key achievements, which have taken our team around the world, from Boston to Singapore, Poland to Washington, DC. Highlights include updates on our collaborative work examining the effect of organizational culture dynamics on unit climate, health, performance, and readiness, as well as a visit from our Commanding General, MG Holcomb. We also welcome our new director, LTC Oscar Cabrera, and two new behavioral health technicians, SPC Cory Lea and SPC Tony Johnson, while saying farewell to SGT James Lee.

I would like to introduce our new director as I return to my duties as deputy director of MRD-W. LTC Oscar Cabrera joins us most recently from the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command (USAMRMC), where he served as the deputy director of Plans, Programs, Analysis, and Evaluation (PPA&E) Directorate. We look forward to working together to continue our tradition of research excellence while building upon our capabilities at JBLM and beyond.

Summer is the busy season for our military as we adjust to new assignments, locations, and colleagues. In that vein, I greet you as the new MRD-W director in the second issue of "WRAIR West."

It is my honor to serve with the unit here at JBLM, as I was assigned to this unit when it was headquartered in Heidelberg, Germany. It was then known as the U.S. Army Medical Research Unit-Europe, USAMRU-E. I was a young Captain, with barely 18 months of active service, and fortunate to be assigned to USAMRU-E, a research activity that exemplified research excellence and displayed the highest standard of scientific integrity.

Over a decade later, it is my privilege to join this magnificent team once more, in a new position and in a new location. MRD-W benefits from an impressive scientific pedigree, with a staff of talented and committed professionals. Building upon my experiences in MEDCOM and HQDA assignments, I look forward to leading this team to achieve great things in support of Army readiness.



LTC Oscar Cabrera

Madigan Research Day

Principal investigators Dr. Jennifer McDonald and Dr. Alexa Lopez served as judges for Madigan Research Day, hosted by Madigan's Department of Clinical Investigation. Drs. McDonald and Lopez rated over two dozen posters ranging in topics from combat casualty care to novel clinical applications.



Asia Pacific Military Health Exchange

MAJ Matt LoPresti delivered a talk on the risk factors for suicidal ideation in U.S. Soldiers stationed in the Republic of Korea at the Asia Pacific Military Health Exchange in Singapore. He also met with Regional Health Command-Pacific on potential opportunities to apply psychological health research to global health engagements in the region.

Achievement Medals

Dr. Alexa Lopez was awarded the Achievement Medal for Civilian Service for her contributions in support of WRAIR's Small-Team Culture Study. She helped establish mechanisms for collecting data during gunnery qualification for tank crews and led development of a unique method of assessing the quality of after-action reviews conducted by Vehicle Crew Evaluators.

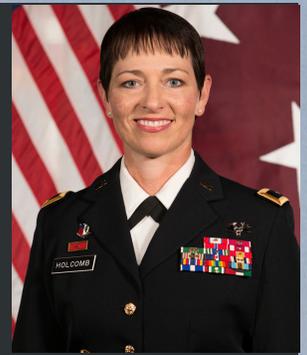
Ms. Michelle Ganulin was awarded the Achievement Medal for Civilian Service for her work as Information Technology Manager for MRD-W. She has provided critical support in securing hardware and software needed for the unit to reach full operational capacity.

Resilience Training Curriculum for OCS

Key findings on the relationship between insufficient sleep and combat mission performance from a 2016 manuscript authored by MAJ Matt LoPresti have been incorporated into the resilience training curriculum for Officer Candidate School (OCS).

Visit from MRMC

On 8 May, MG Barbara R. Holcomb and CSM David Rodgers spent time with the MRD-W team during a week-long visit to JBLM. During the visit, MG Holcomb received a command brief and led a town hall with the MRD-W staff. The command brief outlined the history, mission set, capabilities, and research portfolio of the directorate.



Presentations

79th Annual Meeting of the College on Problems of Drug Dependence

- "Heavy Smoking among U.S. Soldiers Returning from Combat," Dr. Alexa Lopez

31st Annual Meeting of Associated Professional Sleep Societies

- "Insomnia, Short Sleep Duration, And Failed Test Performance In A Military Academic Setting," Dr. Jennifer McDonald

125th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association

- "Validation of the WRAIR Leadership Scale," Dr. Alexa Lopez
- "Characterizing LGBT Mental Healthcare Utilization in a Military Setting," Dr. Jennifer McDonald
- "Gender Differences in Mental Health and Treatment Utilization in Army Academic Trainees," Ms. Julie Merrill
- "Domain-Specific Leadership and Soldier Behavioral Health During Rigorous Military Training," Ms. Maura Taylor

Staff Spotlight



Dr. Jennifer McDonald

Dr. Jennifer McDonald joined MRD-W in July 2016 as our first principal investigator, bringing her years of experience as a clinical psychologist.

Within a year, Dr. McDonald was named W3 Task Area Manager for Suicide Prevention and Reduction as well as the new Army representative to the JPC-5 Working Group.

She was recently published in Military Behavioral Health for her peer-reviewed manuscript, "Return-to-Duty Decision Making and Medical Staff Deployed to Afghanistan." The paper was co-authored with Dr. Amy Adler and Dr. Josh Wilk, of WRAIR's Center for Military Psychiatry and Neuroscience.

SGT James Lee

SGT Lee joined the unit in January 2013, just weeks after the unit relocated from its original location in Heidelberg to Sembach, Germany. As his first duty assignment following Advanced Individual Training, SGT Lee was



instrumental in setting up the unit in Sembach, and then two years later, carrying out the large OCONUS relocation here to JBLM in 2015.

As a 68X Behavioral Health technician, SGT Lee has been able to make substantial contributions to the research mission, in addition to being an all-around go-to NCO supporting all the team's needs, big or small. He has an uncanny ability to anticipate the needs of leadership and principal investigators. SGT Lee is a significant force multiplier for any project.

MRD-W wishes him the best of luck as he pursues an advanced degree in behavioral health research.

Hail & Farewell

Greetings to SPC Tony Johnson and SPC Cory Lea, newest members of the MRD-W team. Prior to being assigned to MRD-W, SPC Johnson attended Advanced Individual Training, Ft. Sam, San Antonio, to re-enlist as a 68X. SPC Lea joins MRD-W after his post as the NCOIC of Inpatient Behavioral Health at Ft. Carson.

MRD-W said farewell to SGT James Lee as he begins a doctoral program at Portland State University.



ABOUT US

The U.S. Army Medical Research Directorate-West is the Army's forward-positioned behavioral health research team that can rapidly respond to the needs of the operational community.

With our small and effective unit at JBLM and our reach-back capabilities to our headquarters at WRAIR, we are uniquely positioned to conduct applied research to protect, optimize and enhance Service member psychological health, resilience and well-being.

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