

# JOAG COA CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

April 30 - May 4, 2006



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## LUTHER TERRY LECTURE

MONDAY

ADM John Agwunobi delivered a spirited lecture highlighting his model for public health crisis developed during his tenure as Florida's Secretary of Health. ADM Agwunobi reflected on his impression of the USPHS officers in khaki working tirelessly during the 2004 hurricane season in Florida. He was grateful for the dedicated assistance the officers provided in Florida and is aware of the potential contributions the Corps can make to our country. He praised the Commissioned Corps for being on the frontlines as never before in response to the historical Gulf Coast Hurricanes and carrying out our mission to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of the Nation.

ADM Agwunobi expressed his enthusiasm for the JOAG and the Commissioned Corps by reading the JOAG Code of Conduct excerpt from the JOAG Coin. His voice booming "I am a Commissioned Officer serving my country" resonated through the attendees and made all as proud as ADM Agwunobi to be part of the Corps.



## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

WEDNESDAY

As VADM Richard Carmona received the 2006 Health Leader of the Year award, COA's highest honor, he seemed humbled by the resounding applause, standing ovation, and enduring support that his officers give him. COA's Executive Director Gerald Farrell credits the SG with reviving the legacy of the Commissioned Corps as leaders in public health.

VADM Carmona shared with attendees his respect for the office of Surgeon General and the historical perspectives of the Commissioned Corps in public health issues and disaster response. He stated that he believes that the main job of the Surgeon General is to uphold the honor and integrity of the position, by making health decisions based on science, not politics. Impartiality is the only way to maintain the confidence that the public has in the Surgeon General and the health information that he provides.

VADM Carmona reflected on his tenure and the effect that the position has had on him. We look forward to his continued leadership through the changes that lie ahead for the Corps. Overall, his remarks were well received and, as usual, infused the attendees with esprit de corps.

## JOAG EXCELLENCE AWARD

The JOAG Excellence Award, which is presented to a non-voting member who has contributed greatly to the mission of JOAG, this year was awarded to LT Aimee Treffiletti, an EHO with ATSDR in Atlanta. LT Treffiletti has been a member of the Professional Development Committee for three years, becoming involved with JOAG shortly after her commissioning in February 2003, and has worked tirelessly on the development of the JOAG coin, Officer Code of Conduct, the Command Ball Cap proposal, the 2005 COA Professional Development Workshop, as well as several other PD projects.

At ATSDR, LT Treffiletti's responsibilities include conducting environmental health evaluations at Department of Defense and community-petitioned sites, and recommending public health interventions to minimize exposures to toxic substances. She also works on a team that develops and implements screening environmental sampling plans at selected sites.

We are fortunate to have such a stellar officer involved in JOAG and working for the benefit of all officers.



VADM Carmona, LT Treffiletti, LCDR Samanic

## JUNIOR OFFICER OF THE YEAR

The Junior Officer of the Year Award is presented annually to a junior officer who has made outstanding contributions to the overall mission of the Corps.

This award, presented at the Awards Luncheon on Wednesday, was given to LCDR Mark Methner, an Industrial Hygienist with NIOSH. He currently serves as Director of Field Research, where he measures occupational exposure to engineered nano-scale materials, and makes recommendations about engineering control technologies that would reduce or eliminate exposures. He and his team conduct Health Hazard Evaluations in a variety of workplaces to determine the magnitude of exposure to a wide range of substances.

LCDR Methner earned his Ph.D. in environmental sciences/industrial hygiene at Rutgers University in 1992. He is also a Certified Industrial Hygienist with the American Board of Industrial Hygiene, a member of the Scientist Professional Advisory Committee, and an executive board member of the Cincinnati Branch of the Commissioned Officers Association.

LCDR Methner's work has contributed to a safer environment for all citizens.



VADM Carmona, LCDR Methner, LCDR Samanic

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

LCDR Claudine Samanic

JOAG enjoyed another successful COA meeting this year in Denver! VADM Carmona started off our JOAG meeting on Sunday with greetings and a few awards. We then enjoyed a very informative and humorous career development presentation from CAPT (Ret.) Paul McSherry. His presentation will soon be available on the JOAG website. On Monday, ADM Agwunobi kicked off the Luther Terry lecture by reading the back of our new JOAG Medallion, which contains excerpts from the JOAG Code of Conduct. By Wednesday we had sold out of the coins, and by Thursday we sold out of our other items, including this year's funny t-shirt: "Semper Incognitus: The Few, the Proud, the Who?" Our Wednesday happy hour was also a huge hit, and we noticed a number of senior officers lurking around!

I'd like to offer huge thanks to all who staffed our booth, organized our social event, designed our merchandise, planned our COA activities, and everything else. I would also like to congratulate our JOAG award winners: LCDR Mark Methner (NIOSH), Junior Officer of the Year award recipient; LT Aimee Treffiletti (ATSDR), JOAG Excellence Award recipient, and recipients of the JOAG Chair Award: LT Mark Rives, JOAG Webmaster; LT Stacey Smith, Co-Chair of our Recruitment & Retention Committee; LT Jane Bleuel, JOAG Vice-Chair and Chair of our Communications Committee; and LTJG Jasen Kuntz, active member of our Professional Development Committee.

We all faced disappointment and frustration this year when DHHS imposed a cap of 500 for authorized travel to the conference. This was very discouraging and confusing. Even those willing to pay their own way were denied administrative leave. We all must do what we can to ensure that doesn't happen next year, and this will be an issue for discussion during our June 9 meeting with the Assistant Secretary for Health and Surgeon General.

For me, one of the best times of the year is when the Commissioned Officer Association annual meeting rolls around. This year was especially enjoyable because I met so many new colleagues, many of whom have recently joined the Commissioned Corps. I suggest you make the effort to regularly attend COA meetings. Take the time to network and socialize, learn who is who, who does what, and identify opportunities for yourself. Take full advantage of the continuing education that is offered, and the unique experiences such as last years Surgeon's General Panel and Global Health Summit, and this year's Leadership Institute.

In closing, I would like to thank the Commissioned Officers Association, the Commissioned Officers Foundation, our fellow officers on the scientific planning committee, and our Category Day planning committees for yet another awesome conference!

- Claudine

## SOCIALIZATION AND MUSIC

Monday evening provided a relaxed, civilian-attire meet and greet reception in the Adam's Mark. Many officers gathered for the appetizers and cash bar. Afterwards, the PHS Ensemble, led by RADM Moritsugu, performed a beautiful variety of patriotic and inspiring musical selections. The officers of the orchestra and choir join from across the country to provide us with outstanding entertainment.

## JOAG SOCIAL EVENT

Nearly 50 officers gathered at the LIME Cantina on Wednesday night to eat, socialize, and dance with new and old friends. We were especially pleased to see so many senior officers there (including a few RADM's), as they have finally realized that junior officers throw the best party! It was a great opportunity to meet officers from other geographic areas and agencies. Huge thanks to LCDR Laura Grogan for organizing the fun!

## CAREER COUNSELING

This year at COA junior officers were offered career counseling. Officers could either make appointments with senior officers from their own category or with OCCO staff. It was a great opportunity to receive personalized career tips and guidance. Counselors provided helpful checklists and handouts to assist officers in promotion preparation. Hopefully this service will continue to improve and reach more junior officers in future years.

## YEAR OF THE COINS

PHS Coins were a major feature at the 2006 conference. Numerous groups and categories had coins for sale. COA sold a Katrina Response Coin, which was popular among officers who deployed. All 200 of the new JOAG coins sold out quickly, thanks in part to the attention that ADM Agwunobi gave it during his lecture. Many officers were eager to collect as many different coins as they could get their hands on.

For those of you who missed out on the first batch at COA, more JOAG coins will soon be available for purchase through the mail! We expect to receive them within the next 2-3 weeks, and will soon announce ordering information. Please contact LCDR Claudine Samanic ([samanicc@mail.nih.gov](mailto:samanicc@mail.nih.gov)) if you have any questions.

### Congrats to SG's 5K Winners:

- CDR Jason Woo- Overall (M)
- LCDR MaryJo Zunic- Overall (F)
- Travis Allen (M 20-29)
- Janae Price (F 20-29)
- LT Don Schmidt (M 30-39)
- LCDR Andra Bottocho (F- 30-39)
- CDR Craig Wilkins (M 40-49)
- CDR Sarah Linde-Feucht (F 40-49)
- CAPT Michael Lyman (M 50-59)
- CDR Julie Orr (F 50-59)
- Ross Westley (M 60-98)

Submitted by LCDR Jodi Tanzillo

The Public Health Leadership Institute started with a motivating opening keynote by VADM Carmona outlining the vital role the Commissioned Corps performs in the response to public health emergencies. Of note was his outline of how transforming the Corps will allow for improved response to national emergencies.

The Junior Officer Panel breakout sessions began with enlightening presentations from RADM (Ret.) Mary Pat Couig, RADM Richard Barror, and RADM Craig Vanderwagen. The overall message was that the application of the ICS is dependent not only on the specific functions of the team members, but relies upon the application of leadership to create interoperability to increase the capacity to respond to the emergent situation. Leaders influence, establish direction, motivate, and inspire. In so doing, leaders offer solutions and have a situational awareness that provides insight to best apply the use of resources.

The second Junior Officer Panel provided specific tools junior officers could implement to develop key leadership skills. LCDR Thomas Pryor presented on the essential characteristics of leadership: self-mastery, initiative, accountability, and team dynamics. LCDR Jean-Pierre DeBarros spoke of the vital role of communication in establishing and maintaining leadership as well as the impact of competency in leadership emphasizing the need for life-long education. LT Wanda Chestnut closed the session with an enlightening discussion of the benefits of mentorship as a cornerstone of the team-building process and the ongoing requirement for self-evaluation as the single most powerful investment we can make to develop leadership abilities.

The presentation by Rajeev Venkayya, M.D. after lunch developed a broader view of the leadership components that can direct the outcomes of response to national emergencies. This provided an apt segue to the next session, the Global Tempest tabletop exercise. The Honorable P.T. Henry facilitated the distinguished panel of experts in the development of a proposed response to an outbreak

of avian flu, providing a view of the logistics and command decisions necessary to address the many facets of an emergency response.

The day ended with an inspirational closing keynote given by VADM Thad Allen who imparted valuable insight to the events that transpired after Hurricane Katrina. VADM Allen's message emphasized the requisite development of meta-leadership to better address incidents of national significance: building leaders that can manage unprecedented events, the ability to lead across complex governmental stovepipes, and establishing interaction between subject matter experts.

The wealth of information disseminated at the Public Health Leadership Institute was invaluable in the advancement of junior officer's who hold the future mantle of leadership within the Public Health Service Commissioned Corps. The Institute expanded on the opening keynote message as articulated by VADM Carmona at the beginning of the day: leadership is being responsible for the destiny of others.

### AIDES DE CAMP

LT Jay Wamsley- Chief Aide	HSO
LCDR Michael Romp	Veterinarian
LT Lisa Palucci	Nurse
LCDR James Begeman	Engineer
LCDR Jennifer Wright	Veterinarian
LT Rosalyn Adigun	Pharmacy
LT Ardis Zah	Nurse
LCDR Cathy Melvin	HSO
LT Joe Golding	Therapy
LT Paula Carter	Nurse
LT Jane Bleuel	Dentist
LT Alicia Souvignier	Therapy
LCDR Jeff Richardson	Therapy
LCDR Nicole Knight	Nurse
LT Michael Quinn	EHO
LT Mollie Ayala	HSO
LT Rachel Louis	Pharmacy
LCDR Stella Wisner	Dentist
LCDR Phillip Driscoll	Dentist
LTJG Jeffrey Allen	Engineer
LT Wanda Chestnut	Nurse
LT Carol Williams	Pharmacy

## DENTAL CATEGORY DAY TUESDAY

Submitted by LT Jane Bleuel

Dental Category Day began with the introduction of our new Chief Dental Officer, RADM Chris Halliday, whose term started on May 1, 2006. Outgoing CDO RADM Dushanka Kleinman was thanked for her leadership and guidance for the past five years.

The day focused heavily on the diversity of deployment roles in which dentists can excel, with presenters describing their experiences as SERT liaisons, clinical dentists, and DMORT members. All who deployed stressed the importance of gaining knowledge of the Incident Command System and the National Response Plan, in order to better contribute as team members and in leadership roles.

The dental category was pleased to have in attendance special guests Dr. Denise Kassebaum, Dean of the University of Colorado School of Dentistry, and Dr. Joel Glover, ADA 14<sup>th</sup> District Trustee. All of the 2006 dental category award winners were also recognized and congratulated. When VADM Richard Carmona stopped by at lunch, he commended RADM Dushanka Kleinman for her selfless dedication to the Corps and the dental category as CPO, presenting her with the Surgeon General's Exemplary Service Medal.

Immediately following lunch, Dr. Nick Mosca, Dental Director of the Mississippi State Health Department, shared with us his first-hand account of the wrath of Katrina on his home and the role that his department played in managing the situation. Dr. Mosca was extremely complimentary of the work of PHS dentists in the relief efforts, and he described his continued work to provide access to care for the many citizens who are still without homes, while balancing it with the needs of the private dentists who are working to rebuild their businesses.

In the afternoon, CAPT Duane Schafer of the US Navy spoke on the role and importance of Forensic Dentistry. The Day concluded with a town hall meeting in which dentists asked the leadership many questions specific to dentists, as well as more general issues regarding personnel policies, promotion, recruitment, retention, and deployments.

In all, Dental Category Day was a notable experience for all dental officers, providing them with useful knowledge, networking opportunities, answers to their questions, and inspiration to continue to serve the citizens of our country in the many ways that we do.

## THERAPY CATEGORY DAY TUESDAY

Submitted by LT Alicia Souvignier

CDR Dan Beck and CAPT Jim Imholte presented on the readiness and response systems of the transformed Commissioned Corps.

LT Jessica Feda, physical therapist with the Bureau of Prisons, presented on differential diagnosis screening for therapists.

Dr. Lemietta McNeilly, Chief Staff Officer of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, presented information on treating swallowing and communication disorders in the disaster scenario.

CAPT Suzanne Pickering delivered and interactive presentation on mental health issues for first responders in the disaster scenario.

LCDR Karen Emi Kajiwarana-Nelson, an IHS audiologist, presented on noise pollution and ways to reduce exposure to excessive noise.

Awards: CAPT Karen Siegel, Josef Hoog Award; CAPT Bonnie Thornton (Ret.), Therapist of the Year; LCDR Jeff Lawrence, Junior Officer of the Year.

## PHARMACY CATEGORY DAY TUESDAY

Submitted by LCDR Gayle Lawson

The Pharmacy Category Day was a long but invigorating day of presentations. The day began with a presentation by CAPT Jim Minor, USPHS (Ret), who was heralded for his 35<sup>th</sup> conference in attendance and as a presenter. He discussed the management of influenza from a public health perspective and enlightened the group on interventions and prevention strategies for preparedness in the event of a global H5N1 avian flu pandemic. Pandemics are characterized by being a new viral entity for which human immunity has not been established producing a rapid and global spread of the virus. Concerns were raised including supplies of effective anti-viral agents, time required to develop the appropriate vaccine, and limited critical respiratory care availability.

Dr. Joseph Saseen provided our category with an update on treating hypertension and hyperlipidemia. Prevalence of both is increasing as a result of the metabolic syndrome seen with an increasingly overweight/obese population. Evidence shows that thiazide diuretics are still the drug of choice for uncomplicated HTN to achieve proven benefits in reducing cardiovascular events.

LCDR Jouhayna Saliba, FDA/CBER discussed CDER's Drug Shortage Program giving insight on how the FDA is communicating and collaborating with industry and the healthcare community to prepare for drug shortages and facilitate alternate manufacturing of the agent or a therapeutic substitute.

CAPT Denise Toyer presented an overview of pharmacy medication errors and how the FDA/CDER endeavors to reduce errors by reviewing drug names and labeling in both pre and post-marketing stages.

Our Chief Pharmacist Officer, RADM Robert Pittman, addressed the group during a luncheon and provided insightful comment on pandemic

influenza, preparedness, disaster response, and recruitment.

The afternoon sessions included topics such as the FEMA Pharmacy Logistics Program; The SERT; Federal Medical Stations; and Implementing Disaster Response Medical Care. These sessions included some real live photos and accounts from our recent deployments to the tsunamis and hurricanes, but placed great emphasis on the improvements already implemented as a result of our recent experiences. LCDR Connie Jung discussed her role as pharmacy team leader at the Federal Medical Station in Baton Rouge, LA post-Katrina, where the team provided in-patient critical and non-critical care and out-patient pharmacy services at two locations 24/7, managing a staff of volunteers, sorting Rx donations from across the country, and supplying Rx go-packs for shelter surveillance missions.

## NURSE CATEGORY DAY TUESDAY

Submitted by LCDR Bernetta Lane

The Nurse Category Day Session was very well represented by nurses from across the globe. These Commissioned Corps Officers displayed a combination of dignity and respect as our USPHS uniform was worn with pride and reverence. The Plaza Ballroom room was filled with such positive energy which set the stage for a day filled with fellow nurse presenters and the Honorable RADM Carol Romano Chief Nurse Officer Report. The Chief Nurse of USPHS delivered a motivational yet inspirational presentation. The Future of Public Health Service Nursing was the headliner in this historical report.

The future of the Public Health Nursing includes supporting the Surgeon General's priorities, and they are as follows:

1. Prevention
2. Public Health Preparedness
3. Eliminating Health Disparities

Nurses continue to be on the frontline as advocates and promoting health literacy in meeting the Public Health Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. These challenges are Globalization, Advances in Science and Technology and Demographic transformation.

#### Globalization

- Increase trade, travel and economic growth
- Diffusion of technology
- Negative social/environmental conditions
  - Drug resistant and re-emerging diseases
  - Gap between rich and poor

#### Advances in Science and Technology

- Increased communication and distribution of health information
- Concern over misinformation, privacy and security

#### Demographic Transformation

- Aging population with chronic conditions
- Increased racial and ethnic diversity

The current healthcare system is highly visible and has lead to RADM Romano establishing an agenda using the R2C2 approach. The R2C2 addresses the future of nursing in public health and creates the next generation of nurses. The R2C2 formula translates to Readiness, Research, Career development and Communication. More specifically these four areas will continue to be a focus and supported by nursing leadership and followership.

As nurses function in such a variety of roles and have been trained to be critically diverse forces in healthcare, the Public Health Nurse Category's total strength is 1334 representing the largest category in the USPHS. However, the greatest concentration of nurses is in IHS,

totaling 34%. Second highest nurse populated area is by 17 % in BOP. The strong representation of nurses in the Commissioned Corp positively contributes to the Readiness Plan and Response Tiers that is underway. The Tiers are broken down into 4 areas known as Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3, and Tier 4.

**Tier 1:** 12 Hour notification

**Tier 2:** 36 Hour notification

**Tier 3:** 72 Hour notification

**Tier 4:** Inactive Reserve Corps

All are required to sign up on the internet for Tiers and identified nursing role. The teams will be formed and everyone is required to meet the Basic Level Readiness.

Other areas of importance discussed by the Chief Nurse were transformation, promotional indicators (benchmarks), CV format, publication and excellence awards and leadership. Additionally, the agenda from the Nurse Category Day was as follows: Public Health Preparedness; Nursing's Critical Role in Response; Nurses Role During Deployment; Public Health Response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita; Technical Matters Related to Deployment; and Types of Deployments and Impact on the Delivery of Care. Following the approval of RADM Carol Romano, these power point presentations will be posted on the NPAC and COA website.

## HSO CATEGORY DAY

TUESDAY

Submitted by LTJG Steven Miller

### Strength through Diversity

**LT Jason Jurkowski discussed the importance of HSOs in deployments:**

The White House Report on Hurricane Katrina mentioned several areas that affect Commissioned Corps Officers: Improving command and control during deployments and planning to be prepared at work and at home for a response.

ADM Agwonobi spoke at a Pandemic Flu conference in DC that our 6000 Officers would be on the front lines of the response.

He raised the question, "Where do we fit in?" Several positions for HSOs have been identified within ESF 8.

The way forward is:

- Accomplish every mission we are tasked with.
- Make the most of our individual talents.
- Individually, we will carry our group forward.

### **CDR Astrid Szeto and LCDR Nicholette Hemingway: ABCs of deployment - A field and office perspective**

Some things to consider before a deployment are;

- Be trained and ready
- Get personal matters in order
- Meet personal medical needs such as:

Pack for deployment

- Pack light but self sufficient
- Pack in zip lock bags
- Pack multi-purpose items

Don't become a casualty;

- Know your limitations
- Know your role

Leave your ego behind;

- Work as a team
- Watch out for your team mates;
- Submit deployment comments

### **"Keep Your Eye on the Ball; Managing the Stress of Crisis Management" presented by CAPT Dana Taylor:**

In the story, CAPT Mike Montello was preparing to deploy to Louisiana by discussing the deployment with his family. He noticed his young son, Gianni, looked upset by the news, so he pulled Gianni aside and talked to him one-on-one. After a few minutes, Gianni ran away. This worried CAPT Montello, but he did not follow Gianni. In a short time, Gianni returned carrying a ball and said, "Don't forget to have some fun while you are there.", and he threw

the ball into CAPT Montello's duffel bag. While deployed, CAPT Montello found the ball and began tossing it to officers on his deployment team when he noticed the officers were getting stressed. CAPT Montello found that games of catch were good opportunities for stress relief for his crew.

### **LCDR Karen Sicard: "Dental Hygiene Diversity: Stepping out of Traditional Roles"**

Objectives discussed were:

- Thinking outside the box
- Awareness of the diversity within the HSO Category
- Need for current billets in the HSO Category that includes billets from all OPDIVs.

Officers should seek and take on responsibilities that allow them to stretch their skills beyond the traditional roles.

Officers should also seize educational opportunities.

### **"Management of Displaced Populations: Applications of Lessons Learned from Bagdad, Iraq" by LT Idongesit Essiet-Gibson**

In her presentation, she stressed the importance of building alliances early, especially with NGOs, in the process of dealing with displaced populations.

-There was less displacement of civilian populations than were projected in pre-war estimates.

-Displacements were mostly rural to urban because people were looking for work.

-Displaced populations usually included large family groups carrying all their belongings with them.

-As the populations moved and settled, de-facto community leaders came forth to represent the groups.

-Tensions arose between the population originally occupying an area and the "new neighbors".

-Access to jobs and schools was a high priority for the displaced populations.