

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN OFFICERS COMMITTEE

of the

United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2022

Executive Committee Members

Chair: LCDR Ruby Leong

Chair-Elect: LCDR Chaolong Qi

Executive Secretary: LCDR Vicky Hsu

Corresponding Secretary: CDR Sophia Park

Treasurer: CAPT Teresa Ramson

MOLC Representatives:

CAPT Simleen Kaur & LCDR Sally Doan

Leadership & Strategic Planning:

CDR Lisa Lee

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APAOC Chair's Corner

Dear APAOC members,

I hope everyone has been enjoying the summer season with family, friends, and colleagues, and has had the chance to relax and recharge.

In the past few months, APAOC has been working hard on the planning of activities and initiatives with noteworthy accomplishments in May for Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month.

- The Public Relations Subcommittee Chairs, LCDRs Doan Singh and Kathleen Tisdale, their respective alternates, LCDR Jogy George and CDR Hai Lien Phung, and their team of volunteers, successfully hosted the second annual AANHPI Heritage Month celebration on May 12, 2022 with U.S. Army Major General Lapthe C. Flora as the distinguished guest speaker. The event celebrated the contributions of past and present Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) service members serving in the USPHS and our sister services (see page 8-9 for further details).

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APAOC Chair's Corner

Continued

- CDR David Huang brought visibility to APAOC and presented on "Healthy People: Eliminating Health Disparities and Achieving Health Equity Among Asian and Pacific Islander Populations" in the annual National Institutes of Health (NIH) AANHPI Health Research Conference on May 5, 2022.
- LCDRs Jun Lee and Marleen Tran represented APAOC, in collaboration with NIH and Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC), to co-sponsor the 2nd Vivek Murthy Lecture Series for Public Health Leadership on May 11, 2022 with US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy and Michelle Wu, Mayor of Boston, as speakers. The link to the recording can be found at <https://videocast.nih.gov/watch=45154>.
- CDR Trang Tran, LCDRs Doan Singh and LCDR Tramara Dam represented the APAOC AAPI Cultural Support Workgroup in a poster presentation titled "APAOC's Efforts to Address Racial Discrimination, Hate Crimes, and Mental Health Disparities in the AAPI Community" at the COF Symposium on May 24, 2022 (see page 7 for further details).
- For National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, LCDR Nicole Pascua and LT Jin Qin represented APAOC in developing and giving an outstanding

APAOC presentation during the Social Work Professional Advisory Group and Psychology Professional Advisory Group's 2nd Annual event on July 22, 2022.

The hard work and accomplishments of APAOC members have not gone unnoticed and we'd like to take this opportunity to shower them with well-deserved recognition.

- Kudos to CDR Jerry Zee for receiving the 2022 FAPAC Uniformed Services honor award.
- Kudos to LCDR Chaolong Qi for receiving the Arthur Flemming Award, a prestigious award for outstanding public servants in different fields, including applied science and engineering.
- Congratulations to the 2022 APAOC Honor Awards recipients, CAPT Maria Fields (RADM Samuel Lin Award), CDR Trang Tran (CAPT Allan Lock Award), and LCDR Theresa Castellanos (RADM Kenneth Moritsugu Award). Special thanks to the Awards & Recognition Subcommittee Chairs, CDR Kent Bui and LCDR Tramara Dam; Minority Officers Liaison Council (MOLC) Chairs, CAPT Simleen Kaur and LCDR Sally Doan; and Chair-Elect, LCDR Chaolong Qi for providing remote and onsite support for planning and executing the successful MOLC Awards Ceremony,

where these APAOC Honor Awards were presented.

Congratulations to all the APAOC officers who have been promoted. APAOC would like to continue to help our officers in preparing for promotions through support for individual and group awards for your APAOC activities, the Education and Training sessions, the expanded mentorship and career networking programs, and individual coaching with the Senior Advisor.

- The Education and Training Subcommittee Chairs, LT Shanly Chen and LCDR Huan Tran and their respective alternates, LT Andrew Su and LCDR Miaka Huynh, successfully hosted a training session on Infectious Leadership by RADM (ret.) Scott Giberson on June 3, 2022. Presented by one of the most influential and "infectious leaders," the key takeaways from RADM Giberson's presentation were "people have a choice in viewing you as a leader and following your lead. When your leadership style becomes contagious, the entire culture can change." APAOC was privileged to have RADM Giberson as the speaker and we hope his presentation was motivational and inspiring for all the 128 officers who attended and beyond.

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APAOC Chair's Corner

Continued

- The Career Development/ Advancement Subcommittee Chairs, CDR Harold Sano and CDR Nguyet Ton, and their respective alternates, CDR Su-Lin Sun and LCDR Minh-Huong Doan, successfully executed two networking sessions as part of the APAOC Career Networking Program. This pilot program is intended for officers to meet and network with a senior officer (O-6 or higher) in an informal setting to obtain career guidance and expand your professional network.
 - ◆ We're thankful for the support and guidance from CAPT Teresa Ramson and CAPT Mimi Phan at the first dinner on June 2, 2022 in Annandale, VA.
 - ◆ APAOC was truly privileged to have RADM (ret.) Kenneth Moritsugu (first AAPI Acting Surgeon General of the U.S. in 2002, 2006-2007) and RDML Emil Wang (Engineer Chief Professional Officer) join us for the second dinner on June 24, 2022 in Falls Church, VA (see page 10-11 for further details). The dinner attendees benefited from RADM Moritsugu's legendary stories and diverse experiences during his

36 year tenure in the USPHS ranging from Medical Officer on board the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Taney (Ocean Station Bravo), Director of the National Health Service Corps, Bureau of Prisons Chief Medical Officer, to Deputy Surgeon General.

- In addition to the APAOC Career Networking Program, please take advantage of the coaching sessions offered by APAOC Senior Advisor, CAPT Juliette Taylor, and keep in touch with your APAOC mentors and mentees on a regular basis.

APAOC had a strong showing at the COF Symposium in May, providing an opportunity for APAOC officers to reconnect and build camaraderie. Thank you for your participation in various APAOC activities; it is your involvement that enables APAOC to continue as a valuable and productive organization for its members. Due to the tremendous demand, APAOC had two social events during the Symposium with close to 50 participants joining. It was exceptionally inspiring to learn about each other, to share stories and wisdoms, and to have fun together. Special thanks to RDML Emil Wang for joining us at one of the social events.

There are further upcoming exciting opportunities to socialize and connect with APAOC members:

- Planning by the Education and Training Subcommittee is underway for the 6th annual APAOC Leadership Summit slated for October.
- The Recruitment and Retention Subcommittee Chairs, LCDR Jason Tu and LT Suresh Jayasekara, and their respective alternates, LT Ying Lin and LCDR Navdeep Bhandari, are hosting a virtual APAOC Social Hour on August 26, 2022 and an APAOC & BCOAG collaborative hiking event in the Fall.
- The Community Engagement Workgroup Chairs, CDR Mona Patel and CDR Quynh-Van Tran and their respective alternates, LCDR Truong-Vinh Phung and LT Jin Qin, are planning for community engagement events, including a Health Fair, in AAPI communities in the Fall.

As we're already halfway through the operational year, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all the voting members, alternates, and volunteers for all of APAOC's accomplishments thus far and look forward to achieving more in the upcoming half of the year to benefit our members and continue to fulfill the APAOC mission.

In Officio Salutis,
LCDR Ruby Leong
2022 APAOC Chair



Interviews with the 2022 APAOC Award Recipients

CDR Trang Tran recipient of the CAPT Allan Lock Service Award

What has been your most unique experience while serving in USPHS?

I had the honor and privilege to serve as the APAOC Chair last year and it was the most humbling and unique experience in my USPHS career. In this role, I had the opportunity to provide the strategic leadership, oversee all operational activities within APAOC at a high level, and work with so many outstanding and dedicated officers. It was through this experience that I learned the importance of stepping out of the comfort zone in my professional growth.

How do you stay motivated throughout your career?

What has been very helpful for me to stay motivated throughout my career is to get involved in the areas that I am passionate about and have the opportunity to make a difference.

What advice do you have for junior officers?

Junior officers should aim to make their long term career an enjoyable learning journey. They should pace themselves appropriately throughout their career. Having multiple mentors from the same category and different categories is also helpful for their professional development. Last but not least, junior officers should start getting involved in different USPHS activities of interest to expand their network.



LCDR Theresa Castellanos recipient of the RADM Kenneth Moritsugu Junior Officer Award



What has been your most unique experience while serving in USPHS?

I deployed to the U.S./Mexico border and was part of the first team of USPHS officers to respond to that particular site. I was paired with an awesome clinical team of officers who I had just met and we managed to set up a medical exam room, order medications to establish a pharmacy, and provide medical care to a vulnerable population that did not speak English.

How do you stay motivated throughout your career?

I surround myself with positive people who have a similar mission to serve others. This is especially important when morale is low. I enjoy my profession of pharmacy and look forward to going to work. Not many people can say that!

What advice do you have for junior officers?

Get involved with your local COA and community events through various USPHS organizations. Through that, you will find a great network of officers across the Service that you would otherwise not have the opportunity to work with. I have experienced unique opportunities such as meeting prior Surgeon Generals and serving as Aide-de-Camp for several Senior officers. Take advantage of those opportunities if they arise. You will not regret it!



APAOC Congratulates LCDR Chaolong Qi

"We are not all in the same boat...but we're all in the same storm!" - Damian Barr



Pictured left to right on the campus of George Washington University: CAPT Juliette Taylor, CDR Trang Tran, LCDR Chaolong Qi

APAOC congratulates LCDR Chaolong Qi for being selected as one of the 12 recipients of the [2021 Arthur S. Flemming Award](#), which recognizes exceptional federal employees with 3-15 years of federal service for performing outstanding service in the fields of applied science and engineering, basic science, leadership and management, legal achievement, and social science. Notable previous award recipients include Neil Armstrong, Robert Gates, Dr. Anthony Fauci, and William Phillips (Nobel laureate in 1997).

Award recipients are nominated by their federal agencies and selected through a competitive judging process by the Arthur S. Flemming Commission, in partnership with the George Washington University and the National Academy of Public Administration.

LCDR Qi is one of the two recipients in applied science and engineering. In an interview that took place immediately prior to the award ceremony on June 6, 2022, he proudly shared the mission of the USPHS, his accomplishments in applied science and engineering, and his motivation in serving. CAPT Juliette Taylor, CDR Trang Tran, and senior leadership from LCDR Qi's agency celebrated with him in the award ceremony hosted at the George Washington University. Read more about LCDR Qi's accomplishments in the [full media release](#).



APAOC at the 2022 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium

2022 USPHS Scientific and Training Symposium

After a two year hiatus APAOC officers were finally able to gather in person at this year's COF symposium held at Glendale, Arizona. Two social events were planned at Carousel Arcade Bar; officers from duty stations all across the nation came together to discuss their deployments, shared agency highlights and reconnect with one another. The comradery, social connection, networking and conversations allowed officers to physically attach a face behind the voice they have heard over the many zoom calls in the past two years. What a breath of fresh air it was. Thank you to all that planned, showed up and made this possible. We look forward to seeing fellow APAOC members at next years USPHS symposium social in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

APOAC Social (Upper Right)- 26 May 2022

(Lower Right)- 24 May 2022

By LCDRs Jen Eng and Chaolong Qi



Presentation on APAOC's Efforts to Address Hate Crimes in AAPI Community

By LCDR Kathleen Ferguson Tisdale, LCDR Tramara Dam, and LCDR Doan Singh

On May 24, 2022, the Asian Pacific American Officers Committee (APAOC) was honored in show-casing the multiple activities performed by the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Cultural Support Work Group (WG) at the 2022 United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Scientific and Training Symposium (Symposium) in Phoenix, AZ. This year the Symposium's Poster Session focused on the measurable impacts achieved by the USPHS Commissioned Corps officers with public health partners and how these efforts advance the health and safety of our nation. The APPI WG was selected to host a poster presentation titled, "APAOC's Efforts to Address Racial Discrimination, Hate Crimes, and Mental Health Disparities in the AAPI Community" during this grand event. The poster highlighted the history of AAPI racism in the United States, APAOC's Officers' experiences with discrimination, hate crimes, and mental health, our efforts in addressing these issues and disparities in AAPI community, and lessons learned to prepare for future initiatives.

This year the Symposium had a total of 27 posters displayed throughout the event. LCDR Doan Singh and LCDR Tramara Dam represented the WG and presented the poster presentation to over 1000 attendees. LCDRs Singh and Dam presented on the content of the poster, spotlighting the accomplishments of the WG that published a resource paper, drafted a White paper with Black Commissioned Officers Advisory Group, hosted three round table discussions to include other Chartered Minority Advisory Groups (CMAGs) and Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity Advisory Group, presented with the United States (U.S) Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health and Assistant Secretary for Administration, and presented at the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States annual meeting. In addition, they showcased APAOC's future initiatives to

include presentations with other CMAGs, Collaboration with Minority Officer Liaison Council on a cultural mentorship program and increase community outreach at different parts of the U.S. to increase mental health awareness and to normalize mental health treatment.

APAOC continues to create an all-inclusive environment that celebrates the Commissioned Corps and APAOC diverse backgrounds. We appreciate all the attendees for attending the poster presentation and we believed that by bringing awareness and resources to the communities, together we can prevent and stop hate crimes.



Pictured left to right: LCDR Tramara Dam, LCDR Doan Singh



The 2nd Annual Asian American and Pacific Island (AAPI) Heritage Month Celebration

By LCDR Jogy George

Edited by LCDR Kathleen Tisdale, LCDR Chaolong Qi, LCDR Doan Singh



MG Flora spoke about his early childhood and growing up in conflict-ridden Vietnam. He detailed the challenges and obstacles for survival faced by his family. After his father died during the Vietnam war, he fled with his siblings and lived several years in the jungles of Vietnam to escape the communist regime who took over the country. He went on to speak about his life journey; how he escaped from his homeland to south Asia, arrived in the U.S. in the early 1980s as a refugee, pursued his education to graduate with a bachelor's degree from Virginia Military Institute, received his U.S. Army commissioning with the Virginia National Guard through the ROTC program, and has served in every staff position with his battalion before promotion to Major General.

As to the experience as an AAPI officer, MG Flora said that his experience over the last 35 years in the U.S. has been overwhelmingly positive. MG Flora spoke about the motivation to serve. He stated that he has two reasons why he chose to serve. First, he said that he owes this country a great debt, a debt that is "infinitely larger" than he is ever capable to re-pay. Second reason, he said was the struggles that he faced in his early life in Vietnam during the war, and how fortunate he is to have had the opportunity made available in this country.

On the topic of shared wisdom, MG Flora alerted us to remember that our country is divided and asked us to remember that there are external factors and adversaries trying their level best to keep us divided. He encouraged us to work with our respective communities and to help each other work through the divisiveness and challenges faced by our country. He encouraged us to work towards uniting the country.

On 12th May 2022, the Asian Pacific American Officers Committee (APAOC) hosted the 2nd annual Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) heritage month celebration. This year's theme was centered on, **Celebrating AAPI Members Serving in the Uniformed Services**. Approximately 80 uniformed officers representing several federal agencies were in attendance during this virtual event. LCDR Ruby Leong, Chair, APAOC, opened the event and introduced the keynote speaker.

The 2022 keynote speaker was Major General (MG) Lapthe C. Flora, U.S. Army, Special Assistant to the Director, Army National Guard in Arlington, VA. MG Flora provided an inspiring life story that encompassed his personal life and his professional career. During his speech he touched on a wide range of issues currently faced by the AAPI community. He provided valuable insights on experience as an AAPI officer, motivation to serve, and shared wisdom.

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The 2nd Annual Asian American and Pacific Island (AAPI) Heritage Celebration

Continued



Major General Lapthe C. Flora, U.S. Army,

Special Assistant to the Director, Army National Guard in Arlington, VA

MG Flora concluded his talk by thanking the APAOC leadership for inviting him and for providing the opportunity to talk about his service to this great country. Following MG Flora's speech, LCDR Kathleen Tisdale continued the celebration to present the history of AAPI officers who honorably served in the uniformed services for over 200 years. Most notably, detailed statistics of AAPI demographics from the Uniformed Services was presented. LCDR Tisdale reiterated that according to the U.S. census, AAPIs are the fastest growing racial group in the United States. Another highlight of this session was a brilliant video presentation summarizing the contribution of Asian Americans who made military history and interesting facts about AAPI in the Uniformed Services. CAPT Joy Lee continued the session by briefly mentioning the names and notable contributions of several former and currently services officers of AAPI descent. CAPT Lee highlighted several AAPI trailblazer leaders who served in the United States Public Health Service that included RADM (ret.) Samuel Lin, RADM (ret.) Kenneth Moritsugu, RADM (ret.) Robin Ikeda, CAPT (ret.) Allan Lock, and the currently serving 21st Surgeon General (SG) and

America's Doctor, VADM Vivek Murthy. Noting that the SG, VADM Murthy played a key role in the administration's response to many daunting healthcare issues, including the Covid-19 pandemic.

LCDR Doan Singh stated the mission of the AAPI Cultural Support Workgroup to bring awareness about racial discrimination, provide education and resources, and actions on how to address racial discrimination and hate crimes. Subsequently, a brief introduction of the current working group members was provided and an overview of noteworthy activities since the group's inception in April 2021. LCDR Singh spotlighted the various future initiatives for the cultural workgroup and provided the attendees with information on how to get involved.

CAPT Juliette Taylor, Senior Advisor to APAOC, provided the closing remarks, thanking Major General Lapthe Flora for sharing his personal story and wisdom with the group and presented him with an official APAOC commemorative coin. She emphasized to the attendees that MG Flora is living proof for immigrants who migrated to this country hoping to live the American Dream and contributed to something bigger for their families and for the country.

CAPT Taylor closed the event with the following quote that resonated perfectly with the theme of the event, *"Bravery isn't facing something you knew you could vanquish...Bravery is facing the impossible and saying, what's next? May you have renewed energy and ask yourself, what's next?"*



Career Networking Dinner Events

By CDR Harold Sano, CDR Nguyet Ton, CDR Su-Lin Su, LCDR Minh-Huong Doan

The Asian Pacific American Officers Committee (APAOC) Career Development and Advancement Subcommittee hosted two career networking dinner events. The purpose of these networking events was to provide an opportunity for U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps Officers to meet casually in an informal group setting with a senior officer (Captain or Rear Admiral) to share career experiences, provide advice, and learn more about each other on a personal and professional level.

The Career Development and Advancement Subcommittee hosted a career networking event on June 2, 2022, with CAPT Teresa Ramson and CAPT Mimi Phan at the 9292 Korean Barbeque restaurant in Annandale, Virginia. Thirteen officers were in attendance. For many of the officers, it was the first time seeing each other since the start of the pandemic. It was a cheerful event with the group enjoying an all-you-can-eat meal and had an informal discussion with CAPTs Ramson and Phan on career development advice, promotion benchmarks, and other topics of interests.



Pictured left to right:
CDR Su-Lin Su, CDR Nguyet Ton, LCDR Doan Singh, CDR Hanah Pham, LT Kerui Xu, LCDR Evelyn Hong, LCDR Marleen Tran, CDR Harold Sano, CAPT Mimi Phan, LCDR Trami Nguyen, LCDR Tramara Dam, CAPT Teresa Ramson

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Career Networking Dinner Events

Continued



Pictured left to right:
Last Row: LCDR Xiaowu Lu, CDR Harold Sano, RADM Emil Wang, LT Lorna Benoit, CDR Nguyet Ton, LCDR Theresa Yu, CDR Michelle Tsai, LCDR Ruby Leong, Hung Nguyen, LCDR Jen Eng, CDR Hong Vu, RADM (Ret) Kenneth Moritsugu
Middle Row: LT Amie Park, LCDR Jung Lee, CDR Su-Lin Sun
Sitting: CDR Curi Kim, LCDR Doan Singh, CAPT Mimi Phan, Lisa Kory

The second career networking dinner event was held on June 24, 2022, with retired RADM Kenneth Moritsugu and his wife Lisa Kory at the Hong Kong Pearl Seafood Restaurant located in Falls Church, Virginia. Not only did we have RADM Moritsugu as our guest of honor, but we also had RDML Emil Wang, Engineer Chief Professional Officer, in attendance. Both Rear Admirals shared one on one conversations with our 16 fellow officers before and during dinner. It was interesting to learn that RADM Moritsugu's daughter Erika Moritsugu serves as the Deputy Assistant to President Joe Biden and Asian American and Pacific Islander Senior Liaison. At the conclusion of the dinner, Ruby Leong, the APAOC Chair, presented both Rear Admirals with an APAOC tee shirt.

Each career networking dinner event was a fun outing to meet and talk with our colleagues again and learn something new from our senior Captains and Rear Admirals after two plus years of the COVID pandemic.



Pictured left to right:
CDR Harold Sano, RADM Emil Wang, LCDR Ruby Leong, CDR Nguyet Ton



AMCP Student Recruitment Presentation at Ole Miss

By LT Adena Yau, LCDR Kali Autrey, and LT Jannet Peroti

On March 3rd, 2022, three officers from Crownpoint Service Unit (CPSU) were invited to speak at a virtual presentation to students at an Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy Student Chapter meeting at the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss). Representing USPHS and IHS through a group of diverse female leaders- LCDR Kali Autrey, LT Adena Yau, and LT Jannet Peroti spoke about their personal career progression, commissioning into USPHS, and current roles.

LT Adena Yau is originally from Queens, New York and attended St. John's University for pharmacy school. After graduation, she pursued a PGY-1 residency at CPSU and was commissioned into the USPHS in the same year. Since then, she has remained at CPSU and taken on additional roles such as adjunct faculty at Rutgers University, residency and student preceptor, and Antimicrobial Stewardship Program Pharmacy Lead. During the event, LT Yau discussed the Junior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (JRCOSTEP) and the Senior Commissioned Officer Student Training and Extern Program (SRCOSTEP), including the application process, duration, expectations, and benefits. She described her personal experience completing a JRCOSTEP at the IHS Crow Agency in Montana. LT Yau also spoke about the experiential programs offered to students by various agencies (e.g., Federal Bureau of Prisons and Food and Drug Administration) and the robust student program at their service unit. Lastly, she provided an overview of the PGY-1 and PGY-2 programs offered at IHS sites nationwide.

LT Jannet Peroti relocated to New Mexico from Stone Mountain, Georgia and attended pharmacy school at South University in Savannah, Georgia. She initially came to CPSU as a civilian pharmacist in 2019 and commissioned into the USPHS in 2021. Her current roles include pharmacy lead in



Pictured top to bottom: LT Adena Yau, LCDR Kali Autrey, LT Janet Peroti

charge of ensuring completion of unit inspections, residency and student coordinator, University of the Sciences preceptor, Pharmacy and Therapeutics (P&T) Committee pharmacy representative, and pharmacy Point of Sale (POS) lead. During the presentation, she discussed the IHS mission and goals, local IHS operations, and the progressive nature of clinical pharmacy practice within IHS. She also elaborated on the requirements and process of obtaining a New Mexico Pharmacist Clinician (PhC) license, including the disease states most commonly managed by Pharmacist Clinicians at CPSU. PhCs in New Mexico have the option of completing additional requirements to obtain a Drug Enforcement Administration license for prescribing controlled substances.

LCDR Kali Autrey is from Kimball, Nebraska and graduated from the University of Wyoming School of Pharmacy. She began her federal and IHS career as a civilian pharmacist before commissioning in 2017. At her local duty site, her current roles include Pharmacist Clinician, residency and student preceptor, and P&T Committee Secretary. She presented on the history of USPHS, roles of pharmacists within various agencies, and emergency response deployments, including her personal deployment experience in response to COVID-19. Students asked questions regarding opportunities to participate at various agencies as a student, JR/SRCOSTEP, resident, or newly graduated pharmacist. Students also inquired about the extent to which Pharmacist Clinicians could practice independently at their site and within the state, and about other agencies or sites that have a similar level of advanced practice opportunities. The virtual event was a success, and pharmacy students from Ole Miss left with a better understanding of the opportunities within the USPHS and IHS.



My Unique Start to Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience: A CMS Perspective

By Sabri Khanyousafzai, PharmD Candidate
Preceptor: CDR Jerry Zee, PharmD, MPH, CPH



Sabri Khanyousafzai, PharmD Candidate 2023
St. John's University College of Pharmacy and
Health Sciences

When it came time to decide where I wanted to complete my Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences (APPEs), I was apprehensive, but excited. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) immediately caught my eye, as my personal experiences have been focused on the community realm of pharmacy, and to have the opportunity to explore such a unique realm of our profession piqued my interest. At my first encounter with CDR Jerry Zee, I was given detailed insight on what the rotation was going to entail and what my future may look like.

During my initial days, I was exposed to core aspects of Medicare to build my understanding and later observed how they were applied to pharmacy billing. This became relevant with CMS meetings, and Medicare Part C & D audits I observed. This new setting allowed me to see how pharmacists operate in a regulatory role. I found it rewarding to learn how certain decisions are made and how problems are resolved when it comes to prescription drugs and health insurance.

This was also unique since this setting involved interactions with team members with different scopes of practice across the United States. This ultimately created an interactive environment where varying perspectives came together for the common goal of ensuring patients receive the best care.

Another aspect that is appealing about CMS is the work environment and opportunities offered. While attending multiple webinars, I was exposed to ideas that emphasized positivity and coming together as a whole. For example, this was done by discussing the importance of mental health, especially while being in a remote setting, and ensuring employees were still able to work together efficiently. Furthermore, CMS' goal is to ensure that their employees are receiving any accommodations they require, even while working remotely. I found this enlightening since I witnessed how each employee is truly valued. Other webinars included focusing on pharmacy board certifications or continuing education trainings. I found this to be beneficial, as it not only refreshed my memory, but continued to prepare me for my future rotations and career.

Overall, I am leaving this rotation with a new perspective and inspiration to continue to explore the various non-traditional settings where pharmacists are able to play a vital role in improving patient care. I've learned that a pharmacist's career is not limited and that there are many, growing opportunities, whether it be within the managed-care setting or the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps where underserved populations may be aided. It has also emphasized the importance of looking for new opportunities, and networking at any chance. This ultimately brings growth and continues to create more opportunities not only for my academic career, but for my professional career as well.



Hoopa Valley Tribe Deployment

By CDR Harold Sano



K'ima:w Medical Center



Redwoods



Wildfire haze on way to the hospital

The summer of 2021 was a challenging period for northern California because of uncontrolled wildfires threatening the redwoods, national parks, and many outlying communities. One community, the Hoopa Valley Tribe, located in northeastern Humboldt county, not only had to deal with sporadic spontaneous wildfires, but also had to deal with a COVID-19 outbreak. The Hupa people are a close-knit community and many are employed by the local K'ima:w Medical Center. As a result of becoming a COVID-19 hotspot, many staff were quarantined and needed urgent assistance to operate the hospital, manage the hospital's drive through testing center, and set up and operate community drive through vaccination sites.

In August-September 2021, 6 USPHS officers were deployed for 30 days to staff the small medical center. The cadre consisted of two physicians, two nurses, one clinical psychologist, and one pharmacist. Being the pharmacist on the team, my role was to staff the ambulatory pharmacy because the chief pharmacist and the lead pharmacy technician had COVID-19 and were quarantined for at least two weeks. The pharmacy, under normal staffing conditions, has two pharmacists and 6 technicians and fills over 100 prescriptions per day. My daily activities included attending the hospital's leadership meeting, participating in patient case discussions, planning for setting up and operating COVID-19 vaccination drive through clinics, and staffing the pharmacy. One of the notable pharmacy roles was assisting the clinical team in implementing opioid prescription controls and educating patients about opioid addiction.

I also participated in two COVID-19 vaccination community drive through clinics. My role was to reconstitute and draw up vaccine doses, while the USPHS nurses and physicians administered the vaccines. We provided much needed patient counseling to educate the community on the importance of getting vaccinated.

Hoopa, CA, is a very beautiful and scenic part of the state and I am honored to have deployed to K'ima:w Medical Center and provide pharmacy assistance and serve the Hoopa Valley Tribe in a time of urgent need.



Gratitude Word Search

By CDR Denise Morrison

As officers, brothers, sisters, parents, supervisors, colleagues, and friends, we have all, at some point or another, experienced loss, grief, disappointment, hardship, frustration, unhappiness, and discomfort. However, **GRATITUDE** can turn what we do have into enough!

R W K H R L C Z X U U N X I Z A G
 S Y H T A E R B J U Z O M M Q N S
 I E D P X E A Y L I M A F J I F E
 K Q U A T A C W D V Y F N H U Q Y
 V Z G G N U H N H E R U T X G U V
 C O A P A A I E E I C Y E A C T Y
 Y G R A C E D P E I R W X V M N H
 L C T E I G L N O E L G R B B P M
 A Q L F F D D L V W S I O V N O W
 H M Y B I S F E O P D M S W D Q B
 B U E C N C A P A C I T Y E S U V
 I S B R G A L Q H T L A E H R X N
 I P I Z I X J H H Q P R J C T U H
 J H U S S C A Y Y P F D W Q S M V
 V S F S T A A H W W E Y S J Z A Z
 Q E G F O E S N O G R E C I F F O
 C B C V G N R I S U P P O R T J R

Key:

America Health USPHS	Breath Officer Freedom	Capacity Resilience Sister	Colleagues Son Significant	Family Sun Everything	Friends Yoga APOC	Grace Support
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(Continued on Page 16)



Gratitude Word Search

Continued

Can you guess what your APAOC voting members are grateful for? Some words may be repeated.

I am grateful for a strong __ p ____ system! - **CAPT Ramson**

I am grateful for __ s _____ c __, a sound mind, __ e e ____, and the ability to make a difference!
- **CDR Morrison**

I am grateful for my __ m ____ and _ r ____ d _ who have been very supportive! - **CDR Lee**

I am grateful to be American and a U ____ S o _ f ____! - **CDR Sano**

I am grateful for my family and _ r ____ d _! - **CDR Ton**

I am grateful for my family, friends, __ l ____ g ____, and the ability to work from home! - **CDR Tran**

I am grateful for my family, friends, and _ m ____ c __, for giving me the opportunities to learn, grow, and become a better person each day! - **LCDR Dam**

I am grateful for _ v _____ n _! - **LCDR Hsu**

I am grateful for family, _____ t __, children, _ u __, y _____, summer, fall and many more!
- **LCDR LaRose**

I am grateful for every _____ t _ I take, the people around me, and all thing in all circumstances. I am grateful for endless _ r ____! - **LCDR Lee**

I am grateful to work in a __ p ____ t _ to protect the health and safety of the public! - **LCDR Eng**

I am grateful for awesome _ P ____ members! - **LCDR Leong**

I am grateful for my older __ s ____! - **LCDR Qi**

I am grateful for my __ g _____ c ____ other! - **LCDR Soo**

I am grateful for my _ o _! - **LCDR Tu**

I am grateful for my friends, __ m ____, and loved ones who support me! - **LT Yau**

The APAOC Publications Subcommittee would like to extend a special thank you to each voting member who shared what they are grateful for. Please remember to always "Be present in all things and thankful for all things." Maya Angelou



Call for Article Submissions and Volunteers

2022 APAOC Newsletter

The Publications Subcommittee is seeking article submissions for the 2022 APAOC Newsletter. Please consider submitting articles highlighting any newsworthy activities of APAOC members, whether you are a general member or a voting member.

Interested in submitting an article or volunteering?

Please forward your submissions to
CDR Denise Morrison, Denise.C.Morrison@ihs.dhs.gov,
LCDR Sophie Soo, Sophie.Soo@hhs.gov,
LT Adena Yau, Adena.Yau@ihs.gov

General Guidelines

- Please submit articles in Microsoft Word (.doc or docx format), using Segoe UI 12-point font.
- Editor(s) will be assigned to each article and they will work with the authors to edit/modify the content as necessary.
- When emailing your article, please include the following subject line: **APAOC Newsletter – [Article Title]_[Author Last Name(s)]**

Agency Clearance (if required for your article)

- Please obtain appropriate clearances for any agency-specific or agency-sensitive information prior to submission to APAOC.
- Before sending the article to your Agency, we encourage the primary author to contact CDR Denise Morrison, LCDR Sophie Soo and LT Adena Yau via email once you have your preliminary draft for an initial review.

Photography Guidelines

- Photographs are strongly encouraged to be submitted with articles. Please ensure that the submitted pictures meet the following guidelines:
- Photographs in .JPG or .PNG format are preferred. High quality resolution is strongly recommended.
- Please embed photo(s) into the Word document and include original file(s) as an attachment for better resolution.
- Uniformed officers must follow the USPHS uniform specifications and related policy uniform (e.g., conference name tags should not be visible over the uniform).
- Uniformed officers must follow general military etiquette when including different ranks (e.g., officers should be ordered in lowest to highest rank, left to right).
- A caption is required for each picture; in the caption, please include the rank and full name for each PHS officer present in the picture.
- If there is a civilian in the photo, please obtain their written authorization to publish the photo.

