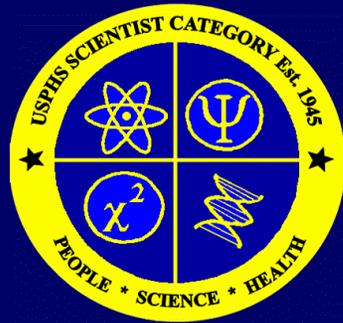


# The Scientist Officer



Spring Edition 2019

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LCDR Rashid Njai leads a discussion on the most recent trends of opioid use in the United States.

## Scientists Attend First-Ever ASPR IMT Training

For the first time ever, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) organized a three-day Incident Management Training Seminar for all members of the National Incident Support Teams (NIST) and Regional Incident Support Team – National Capital Region (RIST-NCR), as well as other individuals that fill incident management roles for ESF-8 during responses, including employees and contractors of ASPR. Recently, ASPR restructured its Incident Response Framework and as a result, is anticipating significant changes this year, including a redesign of the Secretary's Operations Center (SOC) to facilitate and improve communication and coordination efforts. The purpose of the seminar was to meet as group to build a common understanding of the new ASPR incident management system, integrate and coordinate the varied elements of the system, and to streamline the processes used by incident management teams. A total of fourteen Scientist Officers attended the training, out of a total attendance of approximately 370.

In addition to what officers learned from the plenary sessions regarding the new framework of the incident management, mission generation, information management, and credentialing, there were breakout sessions for individual roles of the Incident Management Team (IMT), formerly the Incident Response Coordination Team (IRCT): FHCO (federal health coordinating official)/agency representative, safety, security, chief medical officer (CMO), information management, planning (PLANS), administration and finance (ANF), logistics (LOGS), and operations (OPS). There was also a computer lab session that throughout the seminar to provide hands-on training on use of the new Emergency Management (EM) Portal, where response-related documents are stored. We share the experiences here of three Scientist Officers who attended sessions for different IMT roles.



From left to right: CAPT Kate Brett, CDR Tamara Henderson, CDR Ruiqing Pamboukian, CDR Sara Vagi, CDR David Huang, CDR Qiao Bobo, CDR Fei Xu, LCDR Julia Zucco, LCDR Eboni Galloway, LCDR Nancy Tian. Not pictured: CDR Tegan Boehmer, CDR Chekesha Clingman, LCDR Amy Freeland, and CDR Adrienne Goodrich-Doctor.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Scientists Attend First-Ever ASPR IMT Training, continued from page 2

A member of NIST-D, LCDR Julia Zucco attended the Information Management sessions. The Information Management role is new to the IMT. Recent deployments, including 2017 Hurricane Harvey, Irma, and Maria and the 2018 Unaccompanied Children Reunification Mission, demonstrated the importance of this role to not only collect, but to verify and disseminate information to help meet various mission objectives. The Information Management sessions included an educational background on the topic and discussions on obstacles of data management during past missions. For instance, during Hurricane Maria, the names of health care facilities were tracked differently, making verification of data a challenge. During the Unaccompanied Children Reunification Mission, what constituted a child-parent relationship ended up having some fluidity, presenting difficulty with quickly building and continuously editing a database to track pairs. Those filling Information Management roles were also introduced to how the new Information Management Section fit into the IMT organizational structure and met key ASPR staff supporting this area. They reviewed reports that are prepared during missions, such as incident situation reports (SITREPs) and senior leadership briefings (SLBs), and learned of the potential of geospatial data in tracking efforts. All meeting attendees, not limited to those attending the Information Management track, received training in the Emergency Management (EM) Portal. The system will have incident/event-specific links and include: operations orders (OPORDs), task orders (TOs), requests for information (RFIs), requests for resources (RFRs), Mission Assignment documentation, modeling products, health and safety guidance, SITREPs, event storyboards, etc...

CDR David Huang attended the Planning sessions as a planning officer for NIST-B. While not new to the IMT per se, the Planning role has changed under the new structure, as the resource unit lead (formerly under Planning) has moved to the Information Management role. However, the role of planning still remains to engage in activities that support the incident management process, including completing the incident action plan (IAP) and support plans and process information related to a particular incident. Sessions included developing IAP objectives aligned with the FHCO execution priorities, an overview of the GeoHealth mapping platform for field response, supporting the transition from response to recovery, fostering the relationship between the IMT and SOC, and lessons learned from previous deployments (focused on those taking place in 2018). Learning was also enhanced with joint sessions with Information Management (on creating the situation report), Operations [on translating the operational planning worksheet (form ICS 215) to the assignment list (ICS 204)], and ANF (on working together on accountability and demobilization). Besides the content shared in the sessions themselves, those filling planning roles benefited from in-person networking opportunities and discussions based on a variety of collective incident management experiences.

As an ANF officer for RIST-NCR, CDR Qiao Bobo attended the ANF sessions, which covered specific roles and responsibilities for ANF under the new HHS/ASPR Incident Response Framework, such as how to create accurate rosters, efficiently move responders, and ensure accurate and timely recording of personnel hours worked. The expanded use of the Incident Management Team members especially the roles and responsibilities of ANF in the Health and Social Services Recovery Support Function was presented. Participants in the sessions shared tips and tricks with each other. The training was not only informative, but also fun. The instructors used Jeopardy-style questions, instant polling and jig saw puzzles that held everybody's attention. During the last day, the ANF Officers trained together with the Chief Medical Officers and Safety Officers to better understand how effective cooperation is required to ensure that employee illnesses and injuries are documented and processed according to HHS Policy and Department of Labor guidance. The ANF Officers also had a joint training session with the Planning Section Officers on how to partner to ensure personnel accountability and safe and efficient mobilization, response and demobilization. The collaborative training sessions provided a deeper understanding of how officers in different roles can work together to make each other's lives easier through effective communication.

This training was particularly important for commissioned corps officers serving on NIST and RIST-NCR teams because the roles of these teams during disaster response have increased in recent years. In 2016, 73.6% of NIST and 6.7% of RIST-NCR did not deploy. A year later, only 15.7% of NIST members did not deploy and each member from the RIST-NCR deployed for at least one incident response; in 2018, 34.7% of NIST and 6.7% of RIST NCR did not deploy. In 2016, no one from NIST or RIST-NCR deployed more than three times; whereas for NIST teams, 5% in 2017 and 16.5% in 2018 did; for RIST-NCR, 13.3% in 2017 and 20.0% in 2018 did. Not only are PHS officers from these Tier 1 deployment teams deploying more often, but they are also deploying for longer periods of time. The total number of days deployed across NIST teams in 2018 was 1,333 (averaging 11.5 deployment days/member) and 222 (averaging 7.4 deployment days/member) for RIST-NCR.

**By CDR David Huang, LCDR Julia Zucco, and CDR Qiao Bobo**

# USPHS Officers Help Inform the Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Formulation

On March 6, 2019, CDR Mark Scheckelhoff (Scientist Officer) and CAPT Lisa Grohskopf (Medical Officer) presented at the 155th Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee (VRBPAC) meeting at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) White Oak campus in Silver Spring, Maryland. This Committee reviews and evaluates data concerning the safety, effectiveness, and appropriate use of vaccines and related biological products that are intended for use in the prevention, treatment, or diagnosis of human diseases, and, as required, any other products for which the FDA has regulatory responsibility. This particular meeting was held to discuss the data obtained during the current 2018-2019 influenza season and to make decisions on the formulation and composition of the 2019-2020 influenza vaccine. Representatives from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), FDA, and Department of Defense (DoD) gave presentations that covered incidence of influenza, phenotypic and genotypic characterization, current vaccine effectiveness estimates, and any trends that require special consideration.



CDR Mark Scheckelhoff, a Scientist Officer currently assigned to the Global Emerging Infections Surveillance (GEIS) Program within the Defense Health Agency, represented the DoD and presented data obtained from the DoD's global network of partner laboratories and the DoD Global Respiratory Pathogen Surveillance Program located at Wright Patterson Air force Base. These activities are managed by the GEIS Program and generate data on respiratory pathogens from DoD and foreign military and civilian populations in over 30 countries around the world, including incidence of disease, circulating subtypes, genomic characterization, and vaccine effectiveness studies in highly immunized populations.

CAPT Lisa Grohskopf presented CDC data on influenza surveillance and vaccine effectiveness in the United States, and Dr. Jacqueline Katz provided CDC's extensive global influenza surveillance and viral characterization data. Following discussion of the data and some of the unique trends that were seen to emerge on the circulating influenza viruses, the Committee concurred with the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended components for the Northern Hemisphere 2019-2020 vaccine composition. These included selected viral strains to cover influenza A H1N1 as well as the common influenza B subtypes (Victoria and Yamagata). Like the WHO, the Committee also agreed to postpone the selection of the H3N2 vaccine component due to an emergence of an antigenically different clade of viruses that were described in CDR Scheckelhoff and Dr. Katz's briefs. As seen in previous seasons, selection of strains too early in the season can miss critical shifts and emerging viruses that make the vaccine less effective during the coming season.

The data presented by CDR Scheckelhoff, CAPT Grohskopf, and Dr. Katz clearly communicated to the VRBPAC members that, in numerous locations, a different influenza A H3N2 clade (designated 3C.3A) was becoming much more prevalent and would require consideration for a change to the current vaccine formulation. While the delay in making the selection would hopefully improve the performance of next season's vaccine, it also puts additional pressure on manufacturers to compress timelines to ensure adequate quantities are available to the population. By the end of March, the WHO made their selection for the H3N2 component, choosing a strain representative of the newly emerging clade.

**By CDR Mark Scheckelhoff**

# Asian Pacific Officer Committee (APAOC) Scientists Successfully Led the Healthy Mind Initiative (HMI)

ADM Brett P. Giroir, the Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH), envisions a modernized Commissioned Corps to implement his priorities of transforming the current “sick care system” into a “health promoting system” and addressing “behavioral health epidemics” through the Community Health and Services Missions program. In alignment with ADM Giroir’s vision, APAOC launched the Healthy Mind Initiative (HMI) which leverages APAOC’s capabilities to reach its members’ ethnic communities, establishing a novel and effective partnership model to promote mental health in Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities.

As requested by ADM Giroir in June 2018, APAOC submitted a briefing document on the mission and goals of HMI and briefed RADM Trent-Adams (Deputy Principal Assistant Secretary for Health) and CAPT Joel Dulaigh (Chief of Staff, Office of the Surgeon General) on the achievements of HMI and proposed the expansion of HMI across the country. It is the first time in APAOC’s 28-year history that an APAOC-initiated program has garnered such strong support from senior HHS and Commissioned Corps leadership, Corps officers, our partners and collaborators, and most im-



RADM Trent-Adams (left) was briefed on APAOC’s HMI twice on November 29 and December 19, 2018 by CAPT Josef Rivero (Senior Advisor of HMI), CDR Eric Zhou (2018 APAOC Chair), and LCDR Xinzhi Zhang (Chair, Community Engagement Workgroup, APAOC).

*(Continued on page 6)*

# APAOC Scientists Successfully Led the HMI, continued from page 5

APAOC established the Community Engagement Workgroup to lead and implement the HMI in January 2018 and has accomplished the following in the 2018 operational year:

- Established the HMI team, which consists of **102** officers from different racial/ethnic groups, **8** Commissioned Corps categories, and **13** states.
- Established **26** partnerships and collaborations with national, state, and local governments and community organizations.
- Developed the AAPI-specific mental wellness education material in **4** different languages (English, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese) by partnering with SAMHSA and Asian American Health Initiative in Montgomery County, MD.
- **Fifty-six** Corps officers completed the Mental Health First Aid Training (MHFA) training and **36** completed the Train-the-Trainer sessions.
- Conducted **14** outreach events in the AAPI communities where over **80** Commissioned Corps officers presented or supported the HMI activities.
- Reached out to approximately **800** individuals in underserved AAPI communities.
- Published **18** articles, including the HHS Diversity and Inclusion Newsletter, NIH/National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) blogs, Frontline, APAOC, HSO PAC Newsletters, and a special edition of APAOC Newsletter on HMI.
- Launched the National Ambassador Program to reach out to high school students and promote adolescent mental well-being.

While HMI is a big operation involving over 100 officers, each team member's contribution is credited for the success. Many scientists played critical leadership roles in HMI including LCDR Xinzhi Zhang and LCDR Oliver Ou (Chair and Co-Chair of the Community Engagement Workgroup), CDR Ruiqing Pamboukian (Liaison Officer), and LCDR Nancy Tian (lead of the Chinese Team). It is fair to say that HMI will not be where it is today without the extraordinary leadership and dedication of our Scientist officers.

By CDR Eric Zhou



Scientists attended the Fall Health and Mental Health Resource Fair hosted by the [Chinese Culture and Community Service Center on](#) September 15, 2018 in Gaithersburg, MD. CDR Eric Zhou (Third from the Left), LCDR Oliver Ou (Fourth from the left), and LCDR Xinzhi Zhang (Far Right).

# Atlanta Scientist Officers Engage with Mary Hall Freedom House T.R.O.O.P.S. to Discuss Opioids and Total Wellness

The Mary Hall Freedom House Training Reintegration Outreach & Opportunities Program Services (TROOPS) supports Veterans and Veterans with families who are at risk, or currently experiencing homelessness (<http://www.maryhallfreedomhouse.org/t-r-o-o-p-s>). The organization was founded in 1996 to address the need for residential substance treatment services for women in the metro-Atlanta area and to empower women to break the cycle of addictions, poverty, and homelessness for themselves and their children. Mary Hall Freedom House's current capacity can provide housing and services to over 200 single women and over 75 children on any given day, restoring over 500 lives annually and has served more than 5,000 women since 1996.

LCDRs Gallaway and Njai (both Scientist Officers) coordinated a National Prevention Strategy-Prevention Through Active Community Engagement (NPS-PACE) program on March 29, with a focus on opioids and general wellbeing through a combination of education and skills training. The interactive session included a background overview and in-depth discussion of opioids, pre-cursors and outcomes, and potential financial difficulties. It was an afternoon full of energy, education, and service. Eight PHS Officers participated along with 13 TROOPS clients and staff members. Clients and staff received specific skills training to enable them to make more informed decision making about the use of opioids and financial planning in their lives and the lives of their clients.

**By LCDR Shayne Gallaway and LCDR Rashid Njai**



Eight USPHS Officers (L-R: CDR Ali Danner (Health Services), LCDR Shayne Gallaway (Scientist), LCDR Toscha Stanley (Health Services), CDR Tara Foley (Health Services), LCDR Matthew Lozier (Scientist), LT Steven Rush (Pharmacist), LCDR Rashid Njai (Scientist); Not pictured: CDR Evelyn Rodriguez (Physician)) and 13 Mary Hall Freedom House staff and clients participated in this PACE event discussion opioids and total wellness held March 29, 2019.



LCDR Rashid Njai leads a discussion on the most recent trends of opioids use in the United States.



CDR Ali Danner (Health Services Officer) engages participants in a discussion of steps to prevent financial difficulties.

# D.C. Scientists Gather for Mardi Gras Festivities



On Saturday, March 2, 2019, Scientists located in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area met for an amazing night of fun, food, and fellowship for a Mardi Gras Party at CDR Qiao Bobo's home in Potomac, Maryland. The D.C. Socials Team recreated the Big Easy through festive décor and preparing homemade traditional Louisiana dishes of jambalaya and gumbo along with other tasty treats. Attendees were also treated with freshly-fried beignets and classic New Orleans Hurricane cocktails, courtesy of the Bobo Family. All were invited to adorn glittery masks and real Mardi Gras beaded necklaces to get into the spirit of the occasion. The child-friendly event also allowed six future USPHS Scientists (a.k.a. the children of Scientist Officers) to join in on the fun. The children enjoyed meeting one another and playing games. In total, 25 people attended the Mardi Gras party.

In addition to the sweet and savory dishes, the nametags for partygoers stand out as a notable memory of the event. The nametags served a dual purpose -- to identify attendees and stimulate conversation by having visitors list something to ask them about. For instance, my name tag read "Lacreshia Ejike-King. Ask me about my last name." The nametags proved to be a great way to engage and network.

When most people hear the words "Mardi Gras", they tend to think of beads, parades, and debauchery. Few are aware of this famed event's origins and history. Mardi Gras literally translates in to "Fat Tuesday" in French. Mardi Gras has roots in pagan spring and fertility celebrations as well as Christian Lenten observations preceding Easter. Though Mardi Gras started in France, it is now a worldwide celebration. The first Mardi Gras in the United States occurred in New Orleans 320 years ago on March 3, 1699. Though Louisiana is the only state to have declared Mardi Gras as an official holiday, the D.C. Socials Team intends to continue the tradition and make this a yearly celebration. *Laissez Les Bons Temps Rouler!*

By LT Lacreshia Ejike-King



Jasmine Stewart (LCDR Nancy Tian's daughter) poses for a Mardi Gras parade photo.



D.C. Scientists pose for a group photo.

# SciPAC Mardi Gras Bash in the ATL



While Scientist Officers located around Washington, D.C., gathered on March 2 for an amazing night of fun, food, and fellowship, 18 Atlanta-area Scientist Officers (including one who hadn't attended OBC yet) and their guests gathered for a Mardi Gras bash of their own. CAPT Jennie Thomas, our esteemed SciPAC Chair, graciously hosted the event at her lovely, historic home in Atlanta.

Guests were greeted by a plethora of green, yellow, and purple. There were plenty of beads and merriment for party-goers. Traditional king cakes were paired with pizza, veggies, snacks, dips, and assorted desserts. CDR Jen Adjemian found one of the babies from the king cakes; no one else was willing to claim finding the other.

The Atlanta Socials Team, with the help of other Visibility Subcommittee members, transformed CAPT Thomas's home with fun, colorful decor. CDR Kamil Barbour gifted attendees with his own take on a classic New Orleans Hurricane cocktail. The children in attendance ranged in age from newborns to high schoolers, allowing for some interesting mingling. If a kid wasn't enjoying the yummy food, chasing someone else around the house, or playing games very competitively, you might find him fast asleep. In total, 40 people attended the Mardi Gras party in Atlanta.

By LT Ana Lauer



CAPT Jennie Thomas getting in the spirit for Mardi Gras.



Scientist Officers at the Atlanta, Georgia Mardi Gras bash.



# Beads of Wisdom

## Officer Deployment Narratives

Compiled by LCDR Teresa Wang, LT Alesha Harris, LT Kathleen Hartnett, CDR Wei Guo

**Submit Your Deployment Narrative!** Share your experiences and contribute to the readiness of fellow officers.

The Readiness Subcommittee's Response Narrative Workgroup is collecting narratives from officers who have recently deployed. This includes PHS deployments, as well as select agency-specific activations that align with the PHS mission. Narratives are showcased on the SciPAC website ([dcp.psc.gov/OSG/scientist/deployment-narratives.aspx](http://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/scientist/deployment-narratives.aspx)). To submit your narrative, contact LT Teresa Wang at [<yxn7@cdc.gov>](mailto:yxn7@cdc.gov).

### What was your role during this deployment?

Example roles included:

- Unified Team Commander
- Deputy Safety Officer
- Logistics Officer
- Nursing Assistant
- Case Manager

*"When deployed, all officers feel some level of stress and/or anxiety. As deployments get longer in duration, that stress begins to build and our capacity to handle additional friction diminishes. During a deployment try to be aware of and support the Officers on your team. Take a break, take a walk, and take care of each other!"*

-CDR Mark Miller

### What was the mission of this deployment?

Example missions included:

- 2018 George H.W. Bush Funeral
- 2018 Hurricane Florence
- 2017 Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria
- 2017 Remote Area Medical Mission

*"When the next crisis comes, I will be ready, whether on call or off. Rapid mobilization to bring medical care and compassion is not just a job, it is a vocation."*

-CDR Kenneth Phillips

*Prior to the deployment, I had not worked a night shift in over a decade. It took me a few days to adjust. When sleeping during the day-time, I found it to be very helpful to have ear plugs and a blindfold.*

-LT Patrick Sears

*"Best advice is to pack the bags as soon as you think you might be deployed. When the information about the trip came I only had a few hours to be ready and head to the airport."*

-CDR Eduardo Gomez

*Be prepared for changes in schedule or priorities. Be flexible. Stay well rested, hydrated and fed to the best of your ability.*

-LCDR Jonathan Leshin

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Check out past issues of *The Scientist Officer* at: <https://dcp.psc.gov/osg/scientist/newsletter.aspx>



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