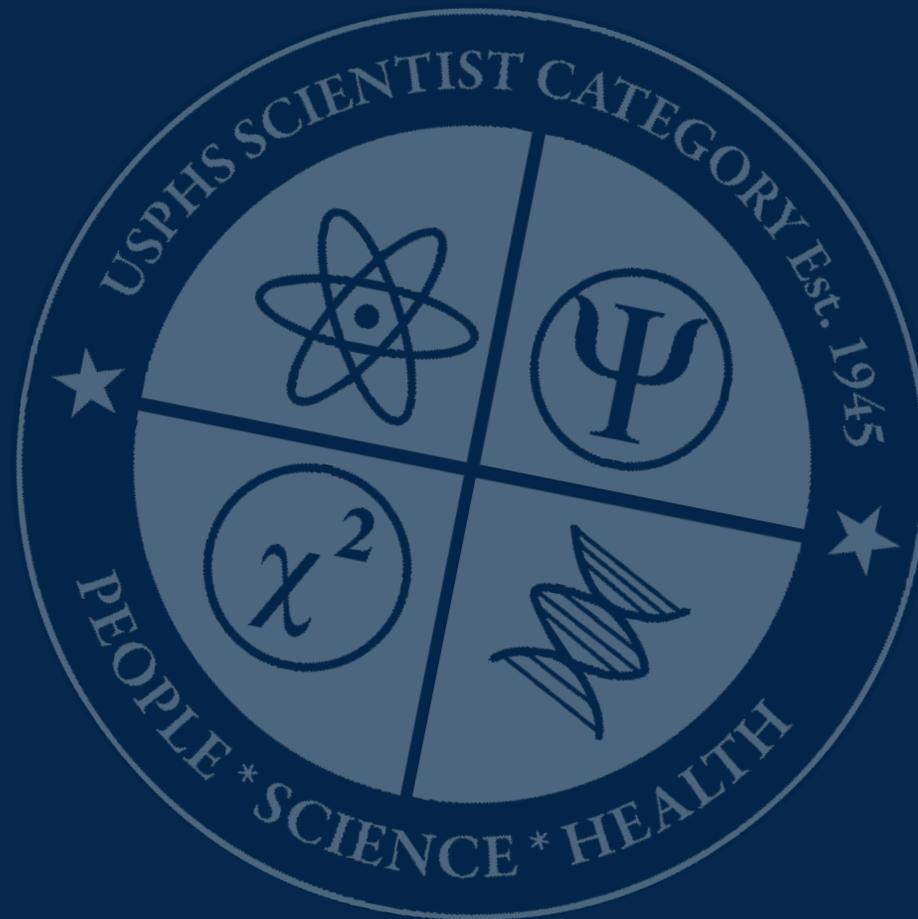


The Scientist Officer



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A message from our SciPAC Chair

By LCDR Jason Wilken

I am honored to serve as the SciPAC Chair for the 2020–2021 operational year. I thank our Immediate Past Chair, CAPT Loren Rodgers, for his exceptional leadership. It was during his term as SciPAC Chair that the COVID-19 pandemic and public health emergency began, and we were fortunate to have a resolute leader as the crisis unfolded. The world has changed, but our mission to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of our Nation remains unchanged—indeed, our mission, our Corps, and our Category are more visible than ever. Our Nation looks to the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps to lead through the COVID-19 response, and Scientist officers have been front and center every step of the way. We have led by example in every Agency in which we serve, with flexibility, with courage, with integrity, and, of course, as data-driven critical thinkers. (We are Scientists, of course!) I could not be prouder of our Category, and I could not hope to be in better company.

In acknowledging our successes, I must also acknowledge our challenges. We have invested enormous time and effort in protecting our Nation and the world. Many of us have deployed, often repeatedly—our Category has averaged 2 COVID-19 deployments per officer.¹ When not on deployment, we have backfilled, taken on extra duties, and covered for critical personnel shortages. We have continued to turn the gears of our Nation’s public health infrastructure under enormous pressure.

I acknowledge these challenges because we owe it to ourselves to be mindful of the toll that our duties can take on us, our families, and our friends. I know our personal relationships can become strained, that we might not see our families as much as we used to, and that we’ve had to forego many of the basic in-person social interactions that we had once taken for granted. We are officers, and we are also human beings. I ask that during this operational year, please prioritize your mission and prioritize your own resiliency. If you have not already done so, please visit the USPHS Corps Care page (<https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/CorpsCare/About%20CorpsCare.aspx>) for resources in strengthening your own resiliency. If you need emergency assistance, do not hesitate to use the crisis lines on the Corps Care webpage.

Your SciPAC subcommittee chairs, liaisons, and Executive Board, and your Chief Professional Officer CAPT John Eckert are here to support you. If you need help, or if you have a great idea to support our Category or the USPHS Commissioned Corps, please reach out to us.

Here to serve.

LCDR Jason Wilken



LCDR Jason Wilken

¹ USPHS Commissioned Corps Town Hall, 10/27/2020

Scientist Officer Deploys to CDC's COVID-19 Response

By LT Xia Michelle Lin

After 31 days as a data analyst on the Routine Reporting Team (RRT), LT Xia Michelle Lin concluded her sixth COVID-19 deployment as co-lead of RRT, a post she filled from mid-August to mid-September this year. The RRT is part of the Case-Based Surveillance Section of the Data, Analytics & Modeling Task Force at CDC. Although the Case-Based Surveillance Section had several PHS Officers, LT Lin was the only PHS Officer on her RRT team.

The RRT works three shifts around the clock to collect, validate, and reconcile US COVID-19 case and death counts for 50 states and 10 other jurisdictions (New York City, District of Columbia, and territories). Most full-time employees on the team work overtime to ensure timely and accurate COVID-19 data. Working on the evening shift, LT Lin developed slides illustrating the epidemic curves for daily incident management meetings, provided line lists about US cases and deaths to the Pan American Health Organization, created reports for the CDC Director on cases and deaths among healthcare personnel, and produced weekly reports analyzing COVID-19 case and death counts data among American Indians and Alaska Natives.

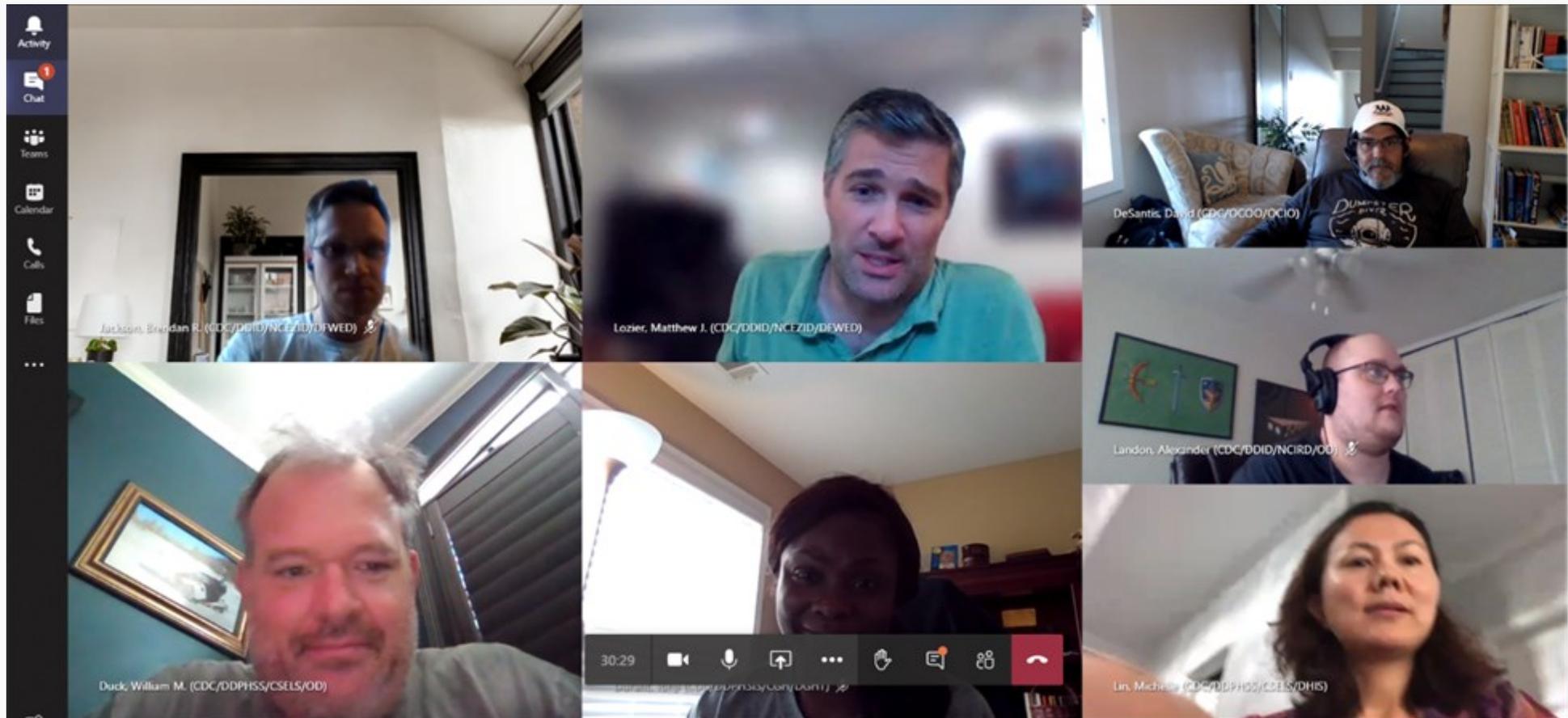
As RRT co-lead, she and the other co-lead supervised 10-15 team members who worked 24/7 to provide daily preliminary and final counts of COVID-19 cases and deaths to the CDC Director, HHS leadership, and the White House. The team provided official case and death counts for daily updates to the CDC website and verified those visualizations before they were posted each day. The team faced many challenges. Some jurisdictions reported probable and confirmed cases while others reported only confirmed cases. Cases among out-of-state residents may or may not be included in a jurisdiction's reported numbers. In early August, the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists changed the case definitions for probable and suspect cases, adding another layer of complexity to case reporting. LT Lin led the reorganization of the team and streamlined processes to maintain timely, efficient data delivery. Throughout this deployment, LT Lin worked 10-14 hours a day, seven days a week.

Even though everyone was teleworking from their homes, the section's video conference calls provided a sense of personal connection which was important for effective teamwork.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)

Scientist Officer Deploys to CDC's COVID-19 Response

By LT Xia Michelle Lin



CDC Brendan Jackson (top left, Physician), CDR Matthew Lozier (top middle), LT Xia Michelle Lin (bottom right), and other CDC employees in the Case-Based Surveillance Section daily huddle, July 31st 2020. (All people shown in the photo have given permissions. Photo credit: Yiling Cheng)

Community Based Testing Site (CBTS) Mission in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

By LT Pushpa Suresh Jayasekara

The World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a “public health emergency (PHE) of international concern” on January 30, 2020. This PHE ultimately developed into a pandemic. The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared the COVID-19 outbreak as a PHE on January 31, 2020. With this declaration, federal agencies began providing assistance focused on the healthcare community response. In mid-March, HHS and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) worked with state and local partners to establish Community-Based Testing Sites (CBTS) in prioritized locations as determined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The purpose of this program was to quickly develop and bring initial testing capabilities to socially vulnerable locations across the country to meet short term testing needs. I was deployed from May 28 through July 1, 2020, to the testing site located at the American Airlines Center in Dallas to support operation of the site and the overall mission.

Deployment roles

I was deployed in the role of Quality Control Officer along with the site lead, CAPT Scotty Hargrave; deputy site lead, LCDR Cornelius Brown; and safety officer, LT Kyle Mann. Apart from these four Public Health Service officers, the site was staffed by clinicians and administrators from the Parkland Health & Hospital System, City of Dallas, Dallas County, and State of Texas. Our testing site was established inside the parking garage next to the American Airlines Center. Working six or seven days a week in extreme working conditions of a parking garage, including exposure to car exhaust, construction dust, and temperatures often exceeding 95 degrees and triple digit heat indices, was very challenging. However, we continually rose to these challenges to fulfill our mission as Public Health Service officers. Our testing site provided testing to people who drove up in their cars and visited walk-up clinics; residents of nursing homes, long-term recovery facilities, alcohol and drug recovery centers, and homeless shelters; health care providers; and first responders.



United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps Officers: CAPT Scotty Hargrave (EHO), LCDR Cornelius Brown (HSO), LT Kyle Mann (Therapist), and LT Suresh Jayasekara (Scientist)

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Community Based Testing Site (CBTS) Mission in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

By LT Pushpa Suresh Jayasekara

Impact

As a team, we were able to establish and maintain excellent working relationships with all parties. As a Scientist Officer, I was able to apply my experience and training in the assurance of quality testing for the community. In total, our team performed 17,254 tests during our deployment. Additionally, the site performed a CBTS single day record of 1,054 tests during this time.

Lessons learned

- Take care of yourself and your fellow officers.
- Complete all necessary trainings and obtain regular updates from leadership to stay informed.
- Understand your roles and responsibilities to support your team and the overarching mission.
- Understand the roles, responsibilities, and interactions among the different response organizations.
- Be flexible in working with different personalities on your team and taking on different tasks that are outside of your profession.
- Leverage your strength(s) to support your team members.
- Have a chat with your team members and start networking.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- After your deployment, make an effort to stay in touch with your deployment team members.

Scientist Officers Deployed for Independence Day in Washington D. C.

By CDR Eric Zhou, CAPT Sally Hu, & CDR Fei Xu

Special events in Washington, D.C., including the 2020 Independence Day celebration, require an array of federal, state and local agencies coordinating closely, not only to provide basic medical care to participants, but also to stand ready to assist in an emergency. To aid in that continual communication, an Incident Management Team (IMT) led by the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) managed the HHS support for the event. CAPT Sally Hu, CDR Fei Xu, and CDR Eric Zhou, members of Regional Incident Support Team – National Capital Region (RIST-NCR), deployed as agency representatives as part of that IMT for the July 4th festivities in the nation's capital. CAPT Sally Hu, the team commander of RIST-NCR, served as the agency representative at D.C. Unified Medical Command; CDR Fei Xu and CDR Eric Zhou served as the agency representatives for the D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) and D.C. Department of Health, respectively. Unlike previous deployments for the Independence Day Celebration, there was no national parade in D.C. on July 4, and part of the deployment was completed virtually to minimize the risk of COVID-19 infection.

RIST-NCR has rigorous training requirements for each position, which greatly increases officers' competency during deployments. For example, for liaison officers, training Level A requires FEMA courses (IS-100, IS-102, IS-200, IS-300, IS-400, IS 546, IS-700, IS-800), AP IAP 2014, ESFO-PHMS, LNO 2013, and Joint Patient Assessment & Tracking System (JPATS); while Level B training includes FEMA courses (IS-75, IS-293, IS-405, IS 2200). All FEMA courses are available at <https://www.firstrespondertraining.gov/frts/npcatalog?catalog=EMI>, except for IS-300 and IS-400 which typically are classroom-based. The remaining courses can be accessed online at <https://respondere-learn.hhs.gov/login>.

Officers interested in becoming liaison officers or receiving continuing education credits to beef up their knowledge and skills for deployment should consider completing these trainings. Officers interested in joining the RIST-NCR team can contact CAPT Sally Hu (sally.h.hu.mil@mail.mil) or CAPT (sel.) Simleen Kaur (simleen.kaur@fda.hhs.gov).



CDRs Vicky Chan (Pharmacist), Eric Zhou (Scientist), and Fei Xu (Scientist) during their deployment to ASPR, Washington, D.C. (Photograph by CAPT Sally Hu)

Scientist Officers' Leadership and Impact within the Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG): A Historical Perspective

By LCDR Gwendolyn Hudson

Contributors: CAPT Sara Newman, CDR Leigh Ann Miller, LCDR Victoria Jeisy Scott, and LCDR Shiny Mathew.

The JOAG is a chartered professional advisory group (PAG) under the Office of the Surgeon General (OSG). Since December 7, 2001, as established by then Surgeon General VADM David Satcher, the JOAG has advised the OSG on issues that affect junior officers (JOs) across all eleven categories of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps (CC). Currently, there are over 2,600 JOs in the USPHS CC, approximately 160 (~6%) are Scientist JOs¹.

For nearly 20 years, JOAG has fulfilled its mission to “provide advice and consultation to the Surgeon General and other Corps and non-Corps entities on interests and concerns specific to JOs in the USPHS CC” with a current vision of “empowering every JO to lead”².

At the heart of JOAG are the non-voting members which consists of all JOs in the CC. JOs are actively involved in at least one of ten JOAG committees and may also serve in Liaison roles to other OSG-chartered PAGs, Commissioned Corps Headquarters (CCHQ), and advisory boards. JOAG recognizes on an annual basis the accomplishments of non-voting JOs through committee recognition awards. JOAG also annually recognizes the most exceptional JOs with three main awards: the JOAG Excellence Award which recognizes a non-voting JO for outstanding leadership to JOAG through active committee or workgroup participation; the Junior Officer of the Year (JoY) Award which recognizes a JO who has made a significant contribution to the overall mission of the USPHS; and the newest JOAG Award, the VADM C. Everett Koop Junior Officer (Koop) Award which recognizes outstanding JOs who have used scientific evidence to advocate for public health policy or healthcare reform on a global scale³. These awards are highly competitive and are traditionally presented to the recipient in front of their peers during the Commissioned Officers Foundation (COF) Symposium.

Of all JOAG Awards presented to JOs over time (N=36), Scientists JOs have received 31% (N=11), the most JOAG Awards awarded to any category (Table 1). Specifically, Scientist JOs have been awarded 38% (N=6) of all JoY Awards (N=16), 25% (N=4) of the JOAG Excellence Awards (N=16), and 25% (N=1) of the Koop Awards (N=4). The Health Services Officers (HSOs) category has received the same number of Excellence Awards (N=3). Interestingly, for the JoY Award, Scientist Officers have received this award for the last four consecutive years and over time, have received twice as many JoY Awards as the next highest recognized category, HSOs with 3 JoY Awards. Given the size of the Scientist category, this feat is quite significant and further demonstrates that our peers in other categories both recognize and appreciate the leadership and impact of Scientist JOs' accomplishments. JOAG is also a fantastic organization for newly commissioned Officers to develop and hone leadership skills.

¹ Source: USPHS Officer Locator Tool, September 18, 2020.

² USPHS JOAG General Body Meeting, October 9, 2020.

³ USPHS JOAG Awards (last updated May 16, 2019) <https://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/JOAG/awards.aspx>

⁴ Source: JOAG By Laws (2017). <https://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/JOAG/documents/JOAG-Bylaws-2017.pdf>

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Scientist Officers' Leadership and Impact within the Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG): A Historical Perspective

By LCDR Gwendolyn Hudson

The PAG consists of 22 leadership, or Voting Member (VM), positions. VMs serve JOs in the roles of Executive Committee (EC) members, Chair of at least one of the ten JOAG Committees, and/or Liaison to one of each categorical Professional Advisory Committees (PACs)⁴. As such, JOAG Voting Membership must include at least one JO for each USPHS category; the remaining VM seats are held by at-large members with no distinct requirement for category representation. After conducting a review of all VM positions and category representation over the lifetime of JOAG, Scientist JOs have filled 9% (N=30) of all 345 VM positions over JOAG's 20-year history. Only HSOs at 19%, Pharmacists at 15%, and Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) at 11% have held more JOAG VM positions over time.

The Pharmacist, HSO, and Nursing categories are traditionally the largest categories in the USPHS typically having approximately 1,200 CC Officers at any given time⁵. Compared to the Scientist (and EHO) category, which have approximately 340 CC Officers at any given time⁶, the numbers indicate Scientists (and EHO) have represented their category and had greater impact in JOAG leadership positions on a per capita basis. When examining the leadership roles of JOAG EC specifically, Scientist JOs have served in 13% (N=11) of all EC positions (N=83) over JOAG's history; having served in the same number of JOAG EC positions as the Pharmacist category. Only HSOs at 27% and EHOs at 19% have served in more EC positions over time.

Many past JOAG leaders and awards recipients feel that JOAG provides invaluable networking and leadership opportunities, as well as acknowledges Officer career accomplishments. As indicated by a former JOAG VM, LCDR Victoria Jeisy-Scott feels that JOAG afforded her a 'great environment to network and gain leadership experience' and found it 'a great way to get to know Officers outside of the category and build relationships' that she will continue to have for her entire career. Likewise CDR Leigh Ann Miller, recipient of the 2020 Koop Award, indicates that receiving the award was a "high honor" and that receiving the award at the COF Symposium was "inspiring to attend and experience esprit de corps with other fellow officers." She advises other JOs deserving of the Koop to be persistent and not to give up. She reports self-nominating twice, before being awarded the Koop Award which she later expressed was the 'capstone of my service as a JO'. As the most recent recipient of the JoY Award, LCDR Shiny Mathew felt it was 'a huge honor to be recognized among well-worthy and well-deserving peers.' She states that the experience contributed positively to her growth as an Officer, yet it also reminds her of the "tremendous responsibilities that she must uphold everyday as a PHS Officer." LCDR Mathew also recommends that senior officers encourage and nominate JOs who are deserving of recognition and that she wouldn't have received the recognition if it weren't for the support of her mentors.

⁵ Source: USPHS Health Services (last updated October 13, 2020) <https://dcp.psc.gov/osg/hso/> and USPHS Pharmacist <https://ccmis.psc.gov/Jarmanator/pharmacy/documents/A-Call-to-Action-508c.pdf>

⁶ Source: USPHS Scientist Professional Advisory Committee Homepage (last updated March 24, 2020). <https://dcp.psc.gov/osg/scientist/default.aspx>

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Scientist Officers' Leadership and Impact within the Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG): A Historical Perspective

By LCDR Gwendolyn Hudson

JOAG is also counseled by the JOAG Senior Advisor (SA). The JOAG SA is a multi-year term position and must be filled by a senior officer that holds the rank of CAPT or above from any USPHS category. The SA may advocate for but does not officially represent JOAG. The SA serves as a consultant to JOAG, advising on JOAG-related issues, concerns, policies and procedures. There have only been five SAs in the history of JOAG and the longest serving SA (>3 years) was a Scientist Officer, CAPT Sara Newman. When asked about her time as SA, CAPT Newman states that serving as JOAG SA was 'one of the most rewarding' leadership positions she has held in her 18-year CC career. It gave her 'great pride in being an Officer and enormous hope for the future of the Corps and raised her awareness to the vast capacity of JOs.' In this role, she too developed skills as a leader, mentor, coach, advisor and support, which she feels are some of the most important skillsets in her current career as a senior officer. CAPT Newman witnessed firsthand the tremendous influence JOAG wields regarding USPHS leadership decision-making. Further, she expressed that JOAG has enormous power and ability to advance the priorities of our Service and our SG. Her time as Senior Advisor was also an opportunity to understand the current issues impacting the JOs, while also getting more clarity on how this important body supports the OSG.

In the spirit of mentorship, JOAG also recognizes senior officers as essential to the success of JOs. JOAG acknowledges the contributions of senior officers through the VADM Richard H. Carmona Inspiration (Inspiration) Award, which recognizes an active duty or retired senior officer who exemplifies outstanding leadership by example, mentorship, and empowerment of JOs. Like the JO awards, senior Scientist Officers have received the most Inspiration Awards (21%, N=3) of all (N=14) over time, tying only with the Pharmacist category who have also received 3 Inspiration Awards (Table 2).

CAPT Newman recalls that JOAG along with SciPAC were the two organizations she spent the bulk of her time (outside of her agency position) as a junior officer. Reflecting on those decisions, she fully believes those were the most important and best decisions she made to further advance her status as a career officer. She recommends JOAG membership to every CC Officer as JOAG is the 'organization that sets the foundation for learning about the PHS and establishing those friendship you will rely on for the rest of your Corps career.'

As evident from the reported figures representing the impact of Scientist JOs as leaders and the outstanding Scientist JOAG awards recipients, Scientist Officers have had a huge impact on the success of JOAG and USPHS CC as a whole. Based on the accounts of past awards recipients, previous VMs, and the longest-serving JOAG SA, JOAG continues to be a needed entity informing USPHS leadership, and it supports networking and relationships that may last a lifetime. JOAG Awards Call for Nominations are typically initiated in the month of November while the Call for Voting Membership occurs in February or March every year. Since the inception of JOAG and the JOAG Awards, Junior Scientist Officers have excelled regarding the number of JOs serving as VM, Officers in the top leadership positions (Executive Committee and Senior Advisor role), and Officers who have received the four major JOAG Awards. I hope Scientist Officers continue to be inspired by the mission of JOAG, and of course in the spirit of friendly competition, continue to express interests in JOAG leadership roles and awards recognition.

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Scientist Officers' Leadership and Impact within the Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG): A Historical Perspective

By LCDR Gwendolyn Hudson

Table 1. JOAG Awards by JO Reported Category Over Time

Award Type (Years Active)	Total Years Active/Total Awards Presented	Number of Scientists Awarded for All Years	% Scientists Awarded for All Years Active	Number of All Other Categories Combined	% All Other Categories Combined
JOY (2005 – 2020)	16	6	38%	10	63%
Excellence (2005 – 2020)	16	4	25%	12	75%
Koop (2017 – 2020)	4	1	25%	3	75%
Total JOAG Awards (2005 – 2020)	36	11	31%	25	69%

Table 2. Inspiration Award by Senior Officer Reported Category Over Time

Award Type (Years Active)	Total Years Active/Total Awards Presented	Number of Scientist Awarded for All Years Active	% Scientists Awarded for All Years Active	Number of All Other Categories Combined	% All Other Categories Combined
Inspiration (2007 – 2020)	14	3	21%	11	79%

SciPAC Fist Bump — Recognition of LT Tanesha Tutt's accomplishments as a JOAG Readiness and Deployment Committee Co-Chair



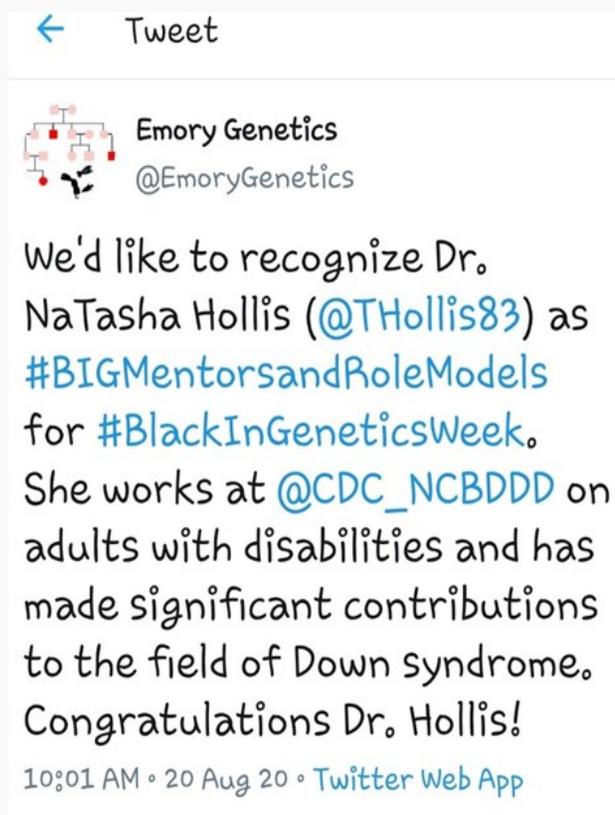
LT Tanesha Tutt

LT Tanesha Tutt represented SciPAC as a JOAG Voting Member from 2018-2020, advising on issues and activities related to junior officers. During her tenure, LT Tutt served as Co-Chair for the Readiness and Deployment Committee, overseeing the activities of three subcommittees, comprised of a total of 140 officers. Under her leadership, several notable accomplishments occurred. The 1st & 2nd annual JOAG Holiday Survivor Challenges were coordinated, in which a total of 198 officers committed to focus on health and fitness over the holidays. Two Back-to-Basics readiness presentations were held in which a total of 179 officers attended, and LT Tutt served as a panelist. Over 30 APFTs across 10 locations were promoted. A process to publish JOAG deployment narratives was established. Finally, on a monthly basis, JOAG members were provided “Practicing Wellness: Tips of the Month,” which focused on mental and behavioral well-being. Keep up the great work LT Tutt!

SciPAC Fist Bump — Recognition of LCDR NaTasha Hollis by Emory University's Genetics Department

During the #BlackInGeneticsWeek, which occurred this year August 17-23, 2020, highlights accomplishments and contributions of Blacks in the field of Genetics. Throughout the week, a different theme is specified daily ranging from Black In Genetics (BIG) role models to scientific contributions to career options. LCDR Hollis was recognized by the Emory Genetics Department as a #BIGMentorsandRoleModels during #BlackInGeneticsWeek for mentorship and scientific contribution for her current work at CDC on adults with disabilities and the contributions that she made at Emory in the field of Down Syndrome. Kudos to LCDR Hollis!

For more information, visit <https://www.blackingenetics.com/>.



LCDR Natasha Hollis

Officer Spotlight — Scientist Deploys to Establish COVID-19 Testing Sites



“I got the request on a Wednesday and I was out by Friday,” CDR Nadra Tyus said, explaining the call she received to report for the PHS mission. “They quickly wanted to stand up community-based testing sites—what we call the CBTs—to bring initial testing capabilities to critical locations across the country.” To learn more about CDR Tyus deployment visit the [NIH Record](#).



From left to right, CDR Nadra Tyus in front of the American Airlines Center in Dallas, Texas and working alongside county, state and federal employees setting up a community-based testing site.

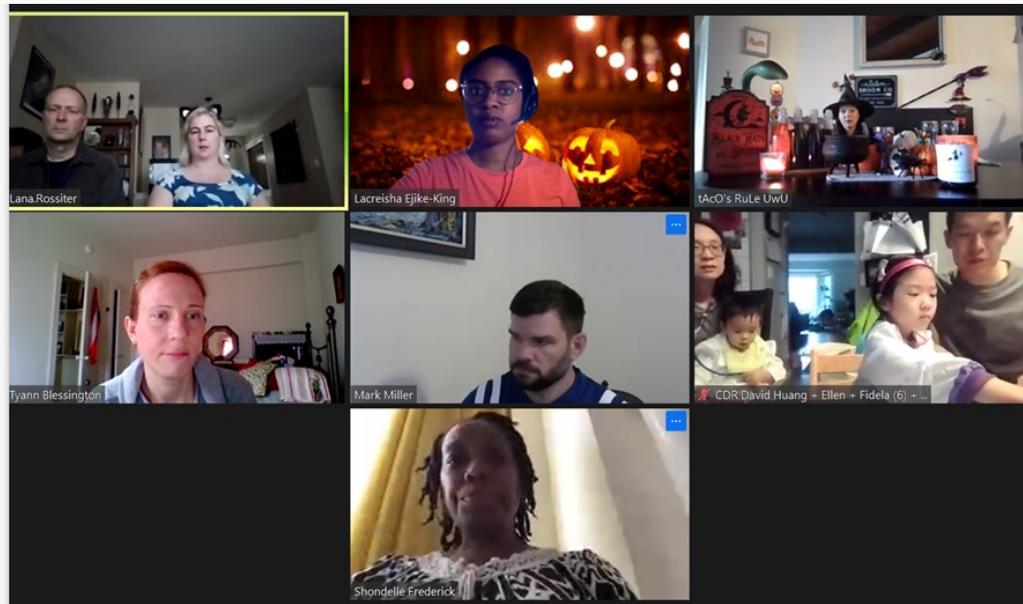
SciPAC D.C. Virtual Halloween Social



By LT Adelaida Rosario



On October 24, 2020 DC Region Scientists CDR Lana Rossiter, CDR Mark Miller, CDR David Huang, LCDR Shondrelle Wilson-Frederick, LCDR Tyann Blessington, LT Lacreisha Ejike-King, LT Adi Rosario and families gathered for a spooktacular SciPAC virtual Halloween social. They came out as witches, wizards, and mad scientists to exchange recipes for magical spells and brews. They had a ghostly great time!



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