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Just FYI

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6 October 1999

The SG's SITREP (N10-99)

Commanding Officers' Conference, Washington, DC

We recently concluded our latest Commanding Officer's Conference here in Washington and I wanted to send this feedback on what I felt was a very productive week. This meeting was a bit different from previous ones in that we specifically designed it for Flag Officers, CO's, and senior enlisted leaders-resulting in about 250 attendees this year, compared with 850 last year. The smaller crowd allowed for more candid discussions about the issues and challenges ahead for Navy Medicine. The conference got off to a tremendous start with an enthusiastic keynote address by the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Jay Johnson. In addition to personally thanking Navy Medicine for "consistently providing high quality health care to Sailors and their families," CNO challenged us to continue striving to make TRICARE a success throughout the entire military health system (MHS). He went on to give an informative status report on the state of the Navy, which he called the nation's "service of choice for the 21st century."

Following the CNO was Marine Lieutenant General J.W. Klimp, who described how the Marines are building tomorrow's Marine Corps, today, through their Vision 21 Program. General Klimp discussed the need to win the "three block war", in which Marines-and the men and women of Navy Medicine who support them-will be called upon to render humanitarian aid in the morning, do peace keeping in the afternoon, and engage in mid-intensity conflicts by night. He said Navy Medicine will have to care for wounded Marines 300 miles inland, from sea-based assets 200 miles at sea. In the "asymmetric" conflicts the Marines envision for the future, Navy Medicine will have to maintain an even smaller, more mobile footprint ashore. All of the plenary sessions looked at "big picture" issues for Navy Medicine including national health care policy trends, the legislative agenda, and strategies for leading high performance organizations. In the career plenary attendees heard an excellent update on the fitness report system, that reaffirmed that fitreps remain the single most important personnel management tool for Navy leaders. The session also included a panel of senior enlisted leaders that focused on HM and DT issues, junior officer mentoring and enlisted leadership. We had a number of breakout sessions, too, that were specifically intended for MTF and DTF COs, fleet and force surgeons, or senior enlisted. Other agendas covered the master training plan for Navy Medicine, the reserve force structure, and issues in medical research and development. The breakouts allowed everyone to get a detailed look at areas of particular interest, and a chance to ask questions and hear from subject matter

experts. They also provided valuable opportunities for both in depth, focused discussions and for informal networking. The mix of plenary and breakout sessions and other presentations came together, I believe, to provide attendees with a stronger foundation for effective leadership. One example of how effective leadership can literally "pay off" was in a plenary presentation by Mr. John Cuddy, the well-known Assistant Chief BUMED for Resource Management. He showed how your aggressive implementation of best business and clinical practices improved Navy Medicine's financial picture in fiscal year 1999, by recapturing workload from the managed care support contractors.

In one of the final plenary meetings the Deputy Surgeon General, Rear Admiral Todd Fisher, presented Navy Medicine's recently revised strategic plan. I am extremely proud of the hard work that our leadership has put into the development of the plan, and I believe it is a good one. If you haven't had a chance yet to read it, you can find it on the BUMED home page (<http://navymedicine.med.navy.mil>) <<http://navymedicine.med.navy.mil>> , in the "What's New" column. We are going to use the plan at the headquarters level as a guide and an indicator to plot the course of Navy Medicine in the future. It is our intention to periodically track and update the plan and its metrics. I ask you to back this plan and to see that yours supports it.

I will be sending out a separate SITREP in the near future with a more thorough look at Navy Medicine's strategic plan.

On the final day of the conference Navy Medicine's flag officers met to discuss how to implement the many lessons learned from this year's conference, and to develop effective strategies for communicating the lessons to the field. In addition, they received an update brief on the Military Health System Optimization Plan, and participated in a tabletop war game exercise. I would be remiss if I failed to mention the successful Spouses' Conference that was an integral part of the whole CO's Conference. This year 60 spouses participated in the three-day program, that included computer and internet training, a military intelligence brief from the Joint Staff, and an enrichment day at Quarters A.

All in all, I believe this year's Commanding Officer's Conference was a tremendous success. I hope that it will help make us better informed and better prepared to lead Navy Medicine into the next century.

R. A. Nelson
Vice Admiral, Medical Corps, USN
Surgeon General of the Navy