

# the MEDDAC-Fort Carson Healthbeat

Serving the Front Range Military Family



A Fort Carson MEDDAC Publication

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## Evans rolls out the *Same-day appointments a priority* mat



Stacy Neumann  
MEDDAC Public Affairs

A new appointment experience is on the way for Evans Army Community Hospital's beneficiaries. MEDDAC debuts a model called "Open Access" on April 1<sup>st</sup> for all Family Medicine Clinics, the Internal Medicine Clinic and Pediatrics.

"When you call, our goal is to offer your first appointment within three hours," explained Maj. Chris Sloan, chief of Clinical Operations Division. "The intent is, when you need health care, we'll have space for you. It's about taking care of today's business...today."

Modifying the appointment model for those clinics is part of Army Medicine's focus on creating a patient-centered experience. To prepare, Sloan's team first had to redistribute the number of patients assigned to a medical

provider. That's why some beneficiaries recently received notices that their primary care manager had changed. Sloan explained, "We are now right-sized across the board. Reducing the size of assigned patients means patients have access to their primary care manager when they want to see them. This is patient driven change."

Providers said they are eager to see how beneficiaries respond. Chief of Primary Care Lt. Col. Joel Tanaka emphasized, "It shows that we are dedicated to focusing on processes that are patient centered. We know we can't claim to be patient centered until you say we are."

The new appointment model applies to all types of primary care visits. "Feeling a bit under the weather? You can get a same day appointment. Have

the day off from work and need your annual physical or well visit? You can get a same day appointment," said Sloan.

The new model should also ease the flow into the Emergency Department. Sloan estimates that 25 to 35 ED cases each day should really be seen at the patient's primary care clinic. The new system ensures they will get that timely appointment. However, beneficiaries should note that same day access does not mean he or she will get the exact hour that they want. In addition, there may be unforeseen patient surges and challenges, particularly during times like flu season.

Tanaka pointed out, "Just keep in mind that we are transforming our culture, which can have bumps in the road. We hope to learn quickly. Patients can

*(Access continued on page 5)*



Photos by: Spc. Kaila Muggli  
Evans Army Community Hospital held its latest training event with a light-hearted Mardi Gras themed walk. Employees stopped at resilience, safety and other educational stations posted along the route.



## EMERGENCY, URGENT, or PRIMARY CARE:

# Do you know the difference and when to use each service?

Rebecca Short and Caron Wilbur  
EACH Registered Nurses

At some time in our lives we have all been there. It's late at night or a weekend and you or a family member is sick. There are choices to consider. Go to the emergency room or wait to see your primary care provider? Which one provides the most appropriate care for the situation?

### Your choice matters

In February, 631 Soldiers, retirees and family members went to emergency departments in our area. Of those, only 45 were admitted with serious injury or illness. The majority were simply seeking non-emergency medical care. Over the past year, enrollees to Evans Army Community hospital have made almost 15,000 trips to off-post community emergency rooms at a cost of more than \$6 million. More than half of those visits were for non-emergent care. Not only is that money that could have been used to offer you additional health care services at Evans, it also means each of those people didn't get to see a provider who is familiar with their medical history.

### Primary Care

As a TRICARE beneficiary enrolled to a military treatment facility, your primary place to receive health care is your Family Medicine Clinic with your assigned primary care manager. Operating on the patient centered medical home model, our system of making appointments and seeing your primary care provider has never been faster or more efficient than it is today. You need only call one number, 719- 526-CARE (2273), provide some basic information and receive the next available appointment.

There are several advantages to seeing your primary care provider. In addition to getting quality medical care, your provider knows your history and your conditions. Your care is documented in

your medical record, which is important when you move to other locations, as you ETS or retire for evaluation of VA benefits when you retire. Finally, your provider focuses on your long-term health, is able to assess and treat current symptoms, and monitors chronic conditions to help you live a full life.

### Emergency Care

Emergency care is for sudden, unexpected medical conditions that, in the judgment of a clear-thinking adult with an average knowledge of health, would endanger or seriously harm a person's life or health if not treated immediately by a licensed medical professional.

An emergency is an immediate threat to loss of life, limb, or eye sight.

In a life-threatening emergency, call

911 or go to the nearest emergency care facility. You may go to any hospital in your area for emergency care.

Remember that all patients arriving at the emergency room are triaged. This is a constant assessment to determine who needs care now, and who can wait. If you or your family member does not have a real emergency, you can spend hours waiting as you watch an almost endless parade of others receive care before you.

The emergency room staff has highly skilled and dedicated people, but they are trained to save lives and limbs and to stabilize their patients. It's important to understand that they are not your long term care providers and don't have the bigger *(Choice continued on page 5)*

## 10-year-old saves mom

Stacy Neumann  
MEDDAC Public Affairs



Photo by: Spc. Kaila Muggli  
Col. John M. McGrath surprised 10-year-old McKenzie Costa with an award to recognize her for helping her mother during a medical emergency.

Col. John McGrath asked the kids in Patriot Elementary School's cafeteria who they thought is a hero. "Iron Man!" "Hawkeye!" "Batman!"

The hospital commander smiled and replied, "Well, my hero is in here. Can I have McKenzie Costa come up here?"

The surprised 10-year-old walked up to the front of the room and McGrath began to tell the room about what happened on March 7<sup>th</sup>.

McKenzie woke up at about five in the morning after hearing her mother call her name once. The mother of five was home alone while her husband Sgt. Lewis Costa was in the field. "She jumped right up. I didn't even say her name loudly but, for some reason, McKenzie came right down," recalled her mother Crystal Costa.

McKenzie went downstairs and found her mother on the floor, gasping for air. She rushed to a neighbor and asked her to call 911. Then, McKenzie ran back and adminis- *(Award continued on page 5)*

# Don't tread on me

Jody Hughes  
MEDDAC Safety Office

Spring officially began on March 20<sup>th</sup>. Outdoor activities will soon fill our afternoons and provide many opportunities to wash the cars, tend to yard work, or simply take the dog for a walk. It is time to shake the wintertime blues. Remember, as the weather warms, we are not the only Colorado inhabitants motivated by the warm hello of the sun.

Colorado is home to 26 species of snakes. Two of those 26 are venomous and reside in the Fort Carson region: The Prairie Rattle-

sake and the Massasauga. Massa what? Right, I was not familiar with this species of rattlesnake either. The Massasauga calls southeastern Colorado home, including El Paso County. This rattlesnake favors altitudes below 5,500 feet in elevation. In contrast, the Prairie Rattlesnake can thrive in elevations up to 9,000 feet. Although the rattlesnake is frequently feared, fatalities are rarely associated with their bites.

In the United States, approximately 8,000 to 10,000 people are bitten by venomous snakes annually. Less than 1 percent die. Comparatively speaking, the honey bee in the garden, the lightning in the spring storms, and even your commute to work pose a greater danger to you than the rattlesnake. There was one fatality in the entire United States attributed to a rattlesnake bite in 2012. What was this person doing when they were bitten? Handling a rattlesnake as part of an outdoor religious service. Sadly, many of these snakes are killed on sight and without cause. Sadly? Yes, these snakes are highly specialized predators that are an essential component of Colorado's ecosystem. Colorado's rattlesnakes become active in April and May.



Article author Jody Hughes took this picture at his home about 11 miles from Evans Army Community Hospital. He was about 15 feet away from the snake.

They require heat to digest their food, and are often found absorbing heat by basking on a road, path, or rock in the afternoon and early evening hours. Colorado rattlesnakes are easily identifiable, when you can see them. They blend perfectly with their surroundings, and are usually not discovered until they employ their rattle as a warning. Rattlesnakes have a large triangular head, heat-sensing pit on their snout, vertical pupils and a thick body. The rattle gives it

away usually; you can see it *and* hear it. If the snake's agitation persists, it will elevate into a "S" coil, inflate its body, hiss, and rattle rapidly. Give this snake wide berth. What do you do if you encounter a rattlesnake? Freeze in place. Freezing movement will reduce the threat posed to the snake. Seek and establish safe distance. Rattlesnakes can strike to a distance of half of their body length. Back away slowly. Leave the snake alone. One-third of bites are a result of trying to handle or kill the snake. In the unlikely event that you become a recipient of a rattlesnake bite, stay calm and seek medical attention immediately. Stay calm and keep a cool head is best when crossing paths with this slithering predator. Having a healthy fear of the rattlesnake is expected, and no one should ever attempt to handle this snake. However it is thought of, these creatures are an essential member of the eco-system and should be respected while you both enjoy the warmer months ahead. ☼

## WTB welcomes new leadership

Photos by : Spc. Kaila Muggli  
The Fort Carson Warrior Transition Battalion welcomed a new commander on March 21st.

At left: Hospital commander Col. John M. McGrath accepts the unit colors from outgoing WTB commander Lt. Col. Mechelle Tuttle.

At right: Lt. Col. Mechelle Tuttle, former WTB commander stands next to hospital commander Col. John M. McGrath and Lt. Col. Aaron Termain, the new WTB commander during a March 21st change of command ceremony.





## Prevent childhood poisoning



Kira M. Koon  
U.S. Army Public Health Command

Poison prevention should be practiced all year round to ensure the safety of your loved ones, especially your children.

While all parents want to keep their children healthy and safe, the truth is that the home can be a very dangerous place if parents do not take the right actions to prevent childhood poisoning. Every day, 374 children in the United States are treated in an emergency department and two die from poisoning. For every 10 poison exposures in children, about nine occur *in the home*.

Poisons can be found in almost every room of every house and curious children will often investigate anything that is within their reach.

The first step is to realize what items in your home can be poisonous. Everyday items, such as household cleaners, medications and cosmetics can cause severe illness and even death if ingest-

ed. Some The common household items that can be poisonous include medicine, mouthwash, beauty supplies, cleaners, bug spray, anti-freeze, alcohol, cigarettes, and certain household plants.

Once you realize the potential poisons in your home, your next step is to take action to prevent your children from having access to these items

**Lock them up.** Lock up medications, household cleaners, cosmetics and other potentially poisonous household products in locked or childproof cabinets out of children's sight and reach.

**Keep an eye on them.** Never leave potentially poisonous household products unattended while in use, and put products back to their locked places as soon as you are finished using them.

**Don't keep it if you don't need it.** Safely dispose of unused, unneeded or expired medications. You can mix them with coffee grounds or kitty litter.

**Read the label.** Always read labels and follow directions exactly on all medications and household products.

**Keep it original.** Keep products in their original containers. Your child may think a cleaning product is a drink if you store it in a soda bottle!

**Refer to medicine as medicine.** Never refer to medicine or vitamins as "candy."

**Know the number.** Put the local or nationwide poison control center phone number, 1-800-222-1222, on or near every telephone in your house, and program it into your cell phone. The poison control center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call the poison control center or 911 if you think a child has been poisoned.

Remember, you have the ability to prevent poisons in your home. For more information, see the following resources:

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.cdc.gov/safekids/poisoning/](http://www.cdc.gov/safekids/poisoning/)

Safe Kids USA, Inc., [www.safekids.org/safety-basics/safety-resources-by-risk-area/poison/](http://www.safekids.org/safety-basics/safety-resources-by-risk-area/poison/)

## Award

(Cont. from page 2)

tered an EpiPen and an inhaler to her mom.

Evans Army Community Hospital paramedics Jason Sexton and Daniel Curtis arrived shortly after.

"What she did was give us a few extra minutes to stabilize her mom. It could have ended in full cardiac arrest," said Curtis. "It's not every day you see a 10-year-old make a good decision like this. Her quick decision was instrumental in saving her mother's life."

"I feel McKenzie acted above and beyond what is expected of most people at any age. She showed courage and quick thinking without hesitation. This truly is a special trait that only a few have," added Sexton.

The paramedics rushed Costa to the hospital. The mother of five had

been in anaphylactic shock, an allergic reaction to an aspirin she had taken. She's doing fine now and watched as McKenzie was recognized on March 20<sup>th</sup>.

McGrath asked the children if they knew what to do in an emergency and they called out the 911 num-



Paramedics Jason Sexton and Daniel Curtis pose with McKenzie Costa after she receives an award.

ber. Paramedics said it's a lesson parents should continually reinforce.

"It's important for families to train to use 911, be aware of medical conditions within the family, and practice emergency drills so kids know what to do. Those precious minutes save lives," explained Curtis.

"It is important that your children understand how this affects the family and how to help when one cannot help themselves," said Sexton.

For her efforts, McGrath gave McKenzie a Commander's Award for Superior Service and the hospital's Command Sgt.

Maj. Ly Lac kitted her out with a hospital backpack and ball cap as her classmates, moms and paramedics looked on.

"It's nice they all showed up to do this," said Costa. "It was special."

McKenzie, on the other hand, was pretty nonchalant.

"It was my mom. We've talked about what to do. I had to help," she smiled. "But this is pretty cool." ☺



## Spring Cleaning? Watch for Hantavirus

Lindsay Huse  
MEDDAC Nurse Epidemiologist

Are your fingers itching to start spring cleaning? As the weather warms up, many of us grab a broom and a rag and get to work clearing out the dust and cobwebs that gather in our homes and garages over the winter. While all of that cleaning may feel great to accomplish and is necessary, there is a chance it could make you sick.

Hantavirus is a virus carried by rodents and can spread to people from rodent urine, saliva, or droppings. In Colorado, the primary carriers are the Deer Mouse and White-Footed Mouse. The virus can be breathed in by people when infected particles are stirred up into the air, such as when sweeping. Hantavirus is most commonly encountered in more rural settings, such as barns, sheds, and outbuildings where rodent populations are higher. However, the Centers for Disease Controls reports, if mice decide your home looks like a cozy place to set up their home, this can also present risk. Other risk factors include opening and cleaning previously unused buildings, such as cabins, working in crawl spaces or vacant buildings, and even while camping and hiking, if infested shelters are used.

Once a person breathes contaminated air, the virus grows in the lungs. Early symptoms may occur one to five weeks after exposure and include fever, headache, muscle aches, stomach problems, dizziness, and chills. It can be difficult to diagnose in this stage because its symptoms are similar to many other illnesses. However, as the disease progresses, patients may have coughing, shortness of breath, and chest tightness as fluid fills the lungs.

Hantavirus is often fatal. A person who suspects they may have become ill after coming in contact with rodents or cleaning an area that might have been infested should see their health care provider right away.

Hantavirus cannot be treated with antibiotics but, with intensive hospital care and antiviral medications, people can recover. The earlier a person seeks care, the better their chances of survival. People who do survive usually do not have long term problems from the infection and the virus goes away completely.

Since it is so often fatal, prevention is very important. These are some steps you can take to minimize your risk:

Seal any holes inside and outside the home to keep rodents out. Two common materials are caulking and steel wool.

Keep food, including pet food, sealed so rodents aren't attracted to it, and keep cooking areas clean.

Keep bird feeders, compost bins, woodpiles, and trash cans away from the side of the home if possible.

If you see evidence of rodents in your home, set traps and try to determine how they are getting in.

If you are cleaning areas where you suspect rodents may have recently lived or are likely to live, take precautions by opening windows or doors and allowing the area to "breathe" for at least 30 minutes. Do not stir up the dust or dirt in the area you think might be affected and wear a dust mask and latex or vinyl gloves while cleaning potentially infected areas. Soak affected areas with a bleach and water solution. Leave it for five minutes and then wipe with paper towels or a rag. If carpets or furniture are in the area, they should be cleaned with a commercial disinfectant made for these items.

If infestations are big, call a professional who specializes in rodent cleanup.

While Hantavirus is rare, it is serious. Preventing rodent infestations and taking care when cleaning potentially infected areas is the best method to prevent human infection. More information on Hantavirus is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/hantavirus> or from Preventive Medicine at 719-526-2939. ☼



## Choice

(Cont. from page 2)

picture and history of your health care.

### Urgent Care

If you have an urgent, non-life-threatening medical problem, our clinics now offer extended hours and nurses are available to answer questions. A provider is on call and available 24 hours for advice if you call the Access to Care line at 526-2273.

Heading to a non-military emergency room or urgent care center before getting an authorization could result in point-of-service charges. That means you may have to pay up to 50 percent of the bill.

### Choose wisely

It's important to evaluate your condition and make the most appropriate choice. Knowing and understanding the differences between a real medical emergency and just being sick has consequences. Help us improve the quality of your long term care by seeing your primary provider. We want to foster a lifetime of wellness! ☼

## Access

(Cont. from page 1)

make this transition easier by giving us feedback on ICE cards, talking to a member of their core health care team or by filling out their Army Level Provider Satisfaction Surveys. We want to understand and meet our patients' expectations of access to care and customer service."

The adjustments to implement the appointment scheduling model have all been made behind the scenes. Beneficiaries should continue to use the same Access to Care Line at 526-2273 to make their primary care appointments. ☼

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

### Comedy Show

The Fort Carson Alcohol and Substance Abuse Program present Bernie McGrenhan on April 18th. Called "Happy Hour", the show is at McMahon Theatre at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Soldiers, Families, units and civilians are welcome. For more information, call 526-9283.

### Join Fit Fort Carson

Join the wellness campaign that's sweeping Fort Carson! Head to <http://evans.armedd.army.mil/PM-fitfortcarson.htm> to get more information about this campaign. Learn about healthier eating habits, get more movement into your life and develop healthy habits! You can also like Fit Fort Carson on Facebook. Call 526-9496 for more information.

### United Healthcare

Beginning April 1st, United Healthcare Military and veterans becomes the TRICARE contractor in the West Region. Visit [www.uhcmilitarywest.com](http://www.uhcmilitarywest.com) to find a welcome packet and more information about your coverage.

### United Healthcare Transition and Referrals

Starting April 1st, United Healthcare Military & Veterans becomes the TRICARE contractor in the

West Region. As part of the transition, referrals written before April 1st will expire on May 31st. If you have a referral, please book your appointment before it expires on that date. If it does expire, you can call 526-2273 to book an appointment and receive a new referral.

### Seeking volunteers for shaving study

The Evans dermatology clinic is performing a research study looking at various razors and topical products to assist with shaving bumps. Soldiers must have at least 10 lesions and be available for three office visits over a 12 week period. Male and female participants will be provided with shaving supplies, a tote bag and topical creams. Call 526-7185 for more information. No referral from your primary care manager is necessary.

### Evans Social Media

Join the conversation! Evans Army Community Hospital is now on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/EvansArmyCommunityHospital](http://www.facebook.com/EvansArmyCommunityHospital). You can also find us on Twitter. We are @EvansHospital.

### EACH ambulance service

Evans Army Community Hospital has its own ambulance service.

In a life or limb threatening emergency or injury, there is no need to head to the Emergency Department in a personal vehicle. Just call 911 and let skilled paramedics and ambulance crews begin administering the critical care needed. They are on duty 24/7. For more information, contact 526-7111.

### Secure Messaging

We have begun to offer a FREE Secure Messaging service to enrolled hospital patients to allow 2-way electronic communications between you and your assigned Primary Care Team. Use the secure system to refill medication or review lab tests & to get your medical questions answered. The confidential exchanges between you and your PCM team become part of your permanent electronic record. Enroll at your clinic's reception desk.

### Self Care Program Suspended

Due to fiscal constraints, Evans Army Community Hospital is suspending the Over-The-Counter medication Self-Care Program. All Self-Care classes have been cancelled. We do not know if or when the program may restart; please keep your self-care card in case it is reinstated. For additional questions, contact Preventive Medicine at 526-8201.

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Col. John M. McGrath  
Commander, Fort Carson MEDDAC  
Command Sgt. Maj. Ly M. Lac  
Command Sergeant Major, Fort Carson MEDDAC  
Roger Meyer  
Public Affairs Officer  
Stacy Neumann  
Editor & Public Affairs Specialist  
Spc. Kaila Muggli  
Public Affairs Intern