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## **MEDDAC changes to improve care**

By Jeff Troth, MEDDAC PAO



Army Medicine is transforming to better support Army Force 2025 and beyond. And, U.S. Army Medical Department Activity- Fort Carson and its Evans Army Community Hospital are leading the way in those changes.

The changes include a reorganization of the Army Medical Command organizational structure from five Regional Medical Commands to four multi-disciplinary Regional Health Commands. Also, the command team structure is also being standardized in Army medical activities' hospitals and clinics.

"Although there are a lot of changes happening in Army Medicine it will be transparent to our patients," said Lt. Col. Eric Poulsen, the MEDDAC's Deputy Commander for Administration. "The restructuring of our higher headquarters and our local command team will only improve patient care. They will continue to have access to safe and quality healthcare."

The reorganization means that instead of reporting to Western Regional Medical Command, located at Joint Base Lewis McCord, Wash., the MEDDAC and Evans hospital now falls under the command and control of Regional Health Command-Central, at Joint Base San Antonio, Texas. RHC-C is responsible for all Army medical assets in the Midwest and Rocky Mountain states.

This reorganization aligns medical units more closely with the Army units that they serve. RHC-Atlantic is aligned with XVIII Airborne Corps units, RHC-Central is aligned with III Corps units, RHC-Pacific covers units within U.S. Army Pacific, and RHC-Europe is aligned with U.S. Army Europe and U.S. Army Africa units.

Restructuring is also taking place within Army hospitals. The Fort Carson MEDDAC and Evans like most Army hospitals had a commander, command sergeant major and three deputies. Now, the command team structure has expanded from five to 12. The daily operations of the hospital were divided among those three deputies, with each responsible for certain functions within the hospital. Those responsibilities are now shared by seven deputies.

"The three deputy commanders have served us well," said Poulsen. "But this new structure will allow deputies to concentrate on a smaller number of

departments and give them the attention, the focus and the leader development time they deserve.”

Poulsen, who is the only one of the three former deputies to remain in his position, said that in the past each deputy had around a dozen departments for which he or she was responsible. This structure didn’t allow enough time to give every department the attention they needed. Now each deputy will oversee only 5 or 6 departments.

Besides the deputies, the command group will also gain a deputy commanding officer, a chief nursing officer and a chief medical officer.

“We are going to make this new structure work because we have a great team, and have some fantastic folks that are stepping into these positions,” said Col. Dennis LeMaster, MEDDAC commander. “The long term benefit that we are going to reap is an enhanced focus on readiness, health, quality, and safety.

“Additionally, this structure provides new (and more) leadership opportunities for both military and civilians on our team,” he added. “The Army is looking for leaders, and that is what we are going to give them.”

Army Medicine planned to fill these new deputy positions with military officers in all but one position. The deputy to the commander for quality and safety would be held by an Army civilian. The MEDDAC chose to also make the deputy to the commander for health readiness an Army civilian.

To assist these new deputies the medical staff is going to assign each of them a senior sergeant.

“I am excited about this – it is a terrific opportunity for our NCOs,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Theon Hart, hospital senior enlisted advisor. “Working with the deputies for 18 months, they will learn so much more about how a hospital works than they could by being limited to working in a department or clinic. This will help them to become great sergeants major in the future.”

Although the Fort Carson MEDDAC is not only first Army hospital to implement this new command structure, it will be the first Army hospital to go through The Joint Commission hospital accreditation process under this new structure. The TJC is responsible for accrediting and certifying more than 20,500 health care organizations and programs in the United States. All aspects of the Evans system for health will be evaluated by this civilian organization next year.

“We will be the first medical center or large medical activity to go through a Joint Commission with this new structure,” said Poulsen. “Evans has always led the way, implementing new ideas and structures for MEDCOM and in

February we are going to prove that this new leadership model will help us attain the highest level of accreditation possible.”