

BUMED Oral History Interview Synopsis
LT Erica Harris, MSC, USN
Research Psychologist, Health and Behavioral Sciences
Naval Health Research Center (NHRC)

Date and Location of Interview: April 08, 2014, Telephonic
Interviewer: Mr. André B. Sobocinski, BUMED Historian

Lieutenant Harris, a native of Appomattox, Virginia, graduated from the University of Virginia in 2001 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology. She received a Master's Degree in Public Health from Boston University in 2005 with dual concentrations in Epidemiology and in Social and Behavioral Sciences. In 2011, she received her Doctor of Philosophy in Behavioral Neurosciences from Boston University.

She was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Medical Service Corps in November 2011. Lieutenant Harris reported to her first duty station, the Naval Health Research Center, San Diego, California, as a Research Psychologist in April 2012. She works specifically on a project investigating objective and subjective measures of sleep in Naval Special Warfare operators during a low operational tempo. She also manages the collaborations of the Naval Center for Combat and Operational Stress Control and I MEF efforts regarding mental health referral needs among active duty Marines.

Lieutenant Harris deployed as an Individual Augmentee (IA) to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom from June-December 2013 on the 8th and final Mobile Care Team (MCT-8). The mission of MCT-8 was to emphasize preventive mental health care, surveillance, and command consultation, including care for the caregiver at static medical commands, by engaging in routine site visits outside traditional medical settings in an effort to reduce mental health stigma and to remove barriers to care. Lieutenant Harris was responsible for analyzing all data collected from a behavioral health needs assessment survey administered to all Navy IAs in addition to creating all briefs for Commanding Officers and Officers in Charge in theater regarding the findings of those collected data.

Lieutenant Harris's personal decorations include the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, and other service awards.

Key Acronyms

BHNAS - Behavioral Health Need Assessment Survey
BUMED - Bureau of Medicine and Surgery
IA - Individual Augmentee
MCT - Mobile Care Team
MRAP - Mine Resistant Ambush Protected

NCCOSC - Naval Center for Combat & Operational Stress Control
NIH - National Institutes of Health
NHRC - Naval Health Research Center
ODS - Officer Development School
PRT - Provincial Reconstruction Team

Key Names

Fisak, Jean, CDR, NC, USN - OIC, MCT-7
Koffman, Robert, CAPT, MC, USN - OIC, MCT-1
McKay, Dave, CDR, MSC, USN - Navy Research Psychology Specialty
Leader, 2010-2013
McNamara, Patrick, PhD - Research Scientist/Sleep Researcher
Shobe, Katharine, CDR, MSC, USN - Research Psychology Specialty
Leader, March 2013 to Present

Glossary

Appomattox, VA - Named for the Appomattox River but named after the Appamatuck Virginia Indian tribe. The town of Appomattox is located just three miles from the Appomattox Court House National Historical Park, which is also known as "Clover Hill." The town measures just 2.2 square miles.

Behavioral Health Needs Assessment Survey (BHNAS) - is an instrument developed by the Naval Health Research Center in San Diego, CA, used to assess the behavioral health needs and to provide behavioral health surveillance of a military unit.

Camp Leatherneck - 1,600 acre USMC base in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

Front Royal, VA - a town in Warren County, VA, is 76 miles west of Washington, D.C. It is believed the name of the town comes from the French "Le Front Royal," a term referring to a time when it was part of the "Frontier of the British Monarchy."

Gladstone, VA - Gladstone is an unincorporated community in Nelson County, VA, United States. It is 13 miles from Appomattox, VA.

Hindu Kush Mountains - is a mountain chain stretching 500 miles from central Afghanistan to Northern Pakistan.

Individual Augmentee (IA) - service personnel who support or "augment" another Navy, Marine Corps or Army command. IAs usually go to their assignment on temporary or TAD orders and return to their current or "parent" command once they complete their assignment. Assignments vary in length from a few months to a year or more.

Mobile Care Team - The Mobile Care Team (MCT) was created in 2009 as a small, rapidly deployable team of professionals inserted into a theater of operations to conduct mental health assessments of units then quickly communicate those

findings to leaders. It is an example of "actionable psychology." The usefulness of this innovation is demonstrated by the eight teams that have deployed since 2009. A typical team consisted of five members, including a research psychologist as analyst, one or two social workers or clinical psychologists, in some cases a chaplain, and a corpsman in the psychology technician rating. As the Army expanded its mental health treatment capability with the establishment of Combat and Operational Stress Control (COSC) clinics throughout Afghanistan, the expedient need for the initial MCTs to shift to a therapeutic role ended, since later teams could arrange for care of urgent cases by the supporting COSC clinic in that area. LT Harris deployed as an Individual Augmentee (IA) and was a member of MCT-8, the last team to deploy to Afghanistan.

"Mustangs" - is a term that originated after World War II to refer to personnel who have moved through the enlisted ranks to become a warrant officer or a commissioned officer. The term literally refers to the mustang horse, which is a wild animal and therefore not a thoroughbred. After being captured, the mustang can be "tamed and saddle broken but it always has a bit of wild streak." At the same time, since a mustang was formerly a wild and free animal, it may very well be smarter, more capable and have a better survival instinct than thoroughbreds. The mustang can take care of itself when "things get tough," while the thoroughbred, having been pampered its whole life, cannot. The term is used in a complimentary sense most of the time. (Source: www.navy Mustangs.com)

National Institutes of Health (NIH) - is the largest source of funding for medical research in the world, creating hundreds of thousands of high-quality jobs by funding thousands of scientists in universities and research institutions in every state across America and around the globe. (Source: www.nih.gov)

Norfolk Southern Railway - is a Class I railroad company that operates over 24,000 route miles in 22 eastern states, the District of Columbia and has the rights in Canada from Buffalo to Toronto and over the Albany to Montreal route. The company is based in Norfolk, VA.

Polysomnography (PSG) - is a type of sleep study, is a multi-parametric test used in the study of sleep and as a diagnostic tool in sleep medicine.

R-21 grants - are exploratory/developmental grants for encouraging the development of new research activities in categorical program areas. (Source: www.nih.gov)

Stephens City, VA - Founded in the 1730s by Peter Stephens, Stephens City is an incorporated town in the southern part of Frederick County, VA.

