

NHRC Scientist Receives Top Scientist Award at Pentagon

Silver Spring, Md. – Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition (ASN RDA), Sean Stackley recognized a distinguished group for their achievements, professionalism and technical excellence during a ceremony July 15 at the Pentagon honoring the 2010 Dr. Delores M. Etter Top Scientists and Engineers of the Year Award winners. Cmdr. Patrick Blair, respiratory diseases research department head at the Naval Health Research Center (NHRC), San Diego, was recognized for his contribution in the early recognition and response to the 2009-2010 A/H1N1 (swine) influenza pandemic.

“These naval scientists and engineers are visionary thinkers and innovative problem solvers,” said Rear Adm. Nevin Carr, chief of naval research, and keynote speaker for the event.

“Today, we honor their achievements as shining examples of what bright, hard working people can do to deliver significant advanced capabilities for ships, aircraft, submarines and expeditionary forces.”

Blair was recognized for his contributions in the early recognition and response to the H1N1 pandemic. Blair and his colleagues reported the first two cases of H1N1 in April 2009 as part of a collaborative effort with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to conduct surveillance along the U.S.-Mexico border. Influenza sequence information and isolates were shared with CDC and the NHRC isolated virus ultimately became the seed strain in the 2009-2010 H1N1 vaccine. NHRC was awarded the CDC Reference Laboratory of the Year Award for this work.

“I am pleased to share in the 2010 Delores M. Etter Science Award,” said Blair. “I am well cognizant that this honor is a reflection of the diligence and hard work the NHRC laboratory and administrative team bring each day to our mission to achieve Force Protection.”

NHRC is considered a key surveillance and diagnostics center for San Diego’s fleet concentration area and for the entire southwestern United States. The laboratory conducts surveillance of respiratory pathogens for all DoD training activities, Pacific rim Navy and Marine Corps stations, and on over 20 large-deck U.S. Navy ships. Their work contributes directly to force health protection by defining critical respiratory pathogen threats and directing appropriate intervention strategies. The laboratory’s work in diagnoses, training, outbreak response and clinical trial development for novel therapeutics has brought great credit to the Navy, and provides a clear public health benefit to service members and their families around the world.