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THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF

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COMMANDING OFFICER
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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

OF THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBJECT:

MISSION OF MILITARY TREATMENT FACILITIES

FEBRUARY 3, 2016

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Chairman Heck, Ranking Member Davis, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for providing me the opportunity to share my perspectives as the commanding officer of Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune (NHCL) as well as the role of military treatment facilities (MTFs) in providing medically ready service members and ensuring an operationally ready medical force. We in Navy Medicine are privileged to care for all those entrusted to our care.

Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune: Mission Ready

I am blessed to serve alongside the men and women of NHCL, which has established itself as a robust medical facility in the region providing outstanding support to the Marine Corps, our local community and across Navy Medicine. Navy Medicine has a unique relationship with the Marine Corps, providing health services support across their operational environments. This means that we have Navy Medicine personnel organically assigned with Marine units, as well as at the hospital. Our importance to the Navy and Marine Corps Team, as well as Eastern North Carolina, cannot be overstated and our contributions are visible in many different ways. The primary reason we exist; however, is to build and sustain the readiness of the operational forces with whom we serve.

For NHCL, readiness takes three major forms:

First: Readiness means that we, those of us who wear the cloth of our nation, are ready at a moment's notice to deploy in support of the Navy and Marine Corps team. Physically, professionally, spiritually, medically and administratively – we as active duty providers are ready at all times to deploy in support of the warfighter. Through the daily delivery of quality medical care and support in a garrison setting, our providers, nurses, therapists, clinicians, technicians and support staff are refining their professional skills and core warfighting competencies. We use the latest technologies in medical simulation training to ensure we maintain currency of skills and are always at the top of our game. Additionally, our location aboard Marine Corps Base

(MCB) Camp Lejeune provides us with unique opportunities to serve alongside our operational medical counterparts to ensure we are not only ready, but already integrated into operational doctrine, protocol and practice. We take pride in the fact that many of our military personnel have deployment experience and they apply their skills to their day to day jobs. Navy Medicine MTFs, including our own, provide that reservoir of forward deployable expeditionary medical support for our Combatant Commanders and play a pivotal role in combat operations. Nowhere is that better understood than aboard MCB Camp Lejeune, where it is common knowledge that no Marine has ever taken a hill without a Navy Corpsman by his or her side. Our exceptional Corpsmen, for whom there is no civilian equivalent, have the distinction of being the most highly decorated rating in the Navy. As a matter of fact, 19 of 22 Corpsmen who received the Medal of Honor served with Marines.

The over 600 Corpsmen at NHCL understand their role and are committed to living up to this covenant. Over the past 15 years of combat, our operational forces have experienced the highest battlefield survivability rate ever recorded in history. Navy Medicine and our partners throughout the MHS are committed to preserving this standard and building upon that commitment.

Second: Readiness means that we ensure the Marines and Sailors of II Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) and those assigned to Marine Corps Installations - East are medically ready to be the first to fight in any theater of operation. As mentioned earlier, while Marines do have embedded medical resources, NHCL provides important specialty and surgical support that enable their warfighters to maintain the highest state of medical readiness. We understand their mission requirements and we ensure that we are staffed and equipped to meet their needs. Our hospital leadership collaborates with commanders at every level of II MEF and is aligned in support of MARSOC's Preservation of the Force and

Family program. Several of the hospital's Branch Health Clinics located around the base are staffed jointly with medical personnel from the hospital and providers assigned to the operational units around the base as we bring Marine Centered Medical Home concepts into action. This initiative is designed to improve access, continuity and quality of care for active component forces in garrison. Two additional Interim Marine-Centered Medical Homes will begin operations this summer supporting Marines and Sailors of II Marine Division.

To further ensure all of our providers are ready, NHCL has developed and implemented training programs and educational symposiums for assigned operational providers, and jointly, our medical teams work together in the field as well as in garrison. And most importantly, our operational forces know that NHCL stands ready to be there should additional resources be required. Since my time in Command, our staff has expertly responded to two mass casualty situations following training mishaps. We were on scene as soon as needed to mitigate the loss of life and respond to injuries. This level of readiness and response could not have been replicated by any civilian medical infrastructure currently in existence in our local area. Our mass casualty system was activated and in place within minutes and despite the late hour of the evening in both instances, our Corpsmen, residing in barracks right on our campus, arrived in force before the first casualties were even transported to our facility. It is what we train for. On an associated but equally important note, we have also established a quick Response Mental Health Team that has deployed to support units and individuals impacted by traumatic events such as these. This joint Mental Health/Spiritual Wellness team is locally available and understands the organization and the mission of the impacted unit/individual.

Third: At NHCL, our team understands that taking care of families directly impacts the readiness of the Sailors and Marines stationed at MCB Camp Lejeune. We know whether

delivering babies or setting the broken arm of a child, both contribute to our ability to provide exceptional care to those serving our nation. Family readiness impacts force readiness.

We are committed to quality, safety access and service. Like all of the MHS, we actively collaborated with the Partnership for Patients initiative, implementing best practice protocols to increase patient safety and prevent hospital acquired conditions. Through these collaborative efforts, we improved quality indicators throughout our facility and reduced readmission rates by 31 percent since inception. To reduce the risk of Unintended Retained Foreign Objects during surgery, we've also introduced Radio-frequency Identification (RFID) technology into the OR. Radio frequency identified sponges have been implemented and these objects are identified passively with the use of a "wand" in the OR, and, alert staff to retained sponges prior to exit from the OR suite.

Access to care is also at the forefront of what we do and we at NHCL are making sure our families can get the care they need, day and night, seven days a week, 365 days a year. We are also aware that with changing patient demographics and generational expectations, the nature of how our patients may want to access care has also changed. We are proud to be among the leaders at meeting this new demand for access and communication.

NCHL providers are enthusiastic users of the secure patient-provider electronic communication application that our beneficiaries can use to conveniently exchange emails with their Medical Home Port health care team, to follow up about an appointment, discuss concerns or just to connect with their provider whenever the need arises.

Our team at NHCL has developed an innovative patient Smartphone application that has been the most frequently downloaded in Navy Medicine and provides one centralized portal for our patients to connect and make appointments, get lab results, check availability and refill prescriptions. NHCL is also very proud to have been nominated and approved as the first MHS

site for the White House Social and Behavioral Sciences' efforts to support Secure Messaging expansion. This team under the National Science and Technology Council and chaired by the Assistant to the President for Science and Technology, has partnered with NHCL to develop research protocols to gather data and analyze the use of secure messaging and demonstrate its efficacy in improving patient satisfaction and quality outcome metrics.

NHCL delivers the third most number of babies in Navy Medicine and is proud to note that we have implemented the “Centering in Pregnancy” program that offers group Pre-Natal Care to our patients. This innovative care model, which follows all guidelines from the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, offers mothers-to-be a unique, supportive atmosphere that: promotes education, focuses on peer group connections and has been extremely popular with many of our patients, particularly those lacking built-in support systems due to geographic isolation, a deployed spouse or other challenges associated with military service. According to The Centering Healthcare Institute, NHCL, with 27 active Centering groups, has the highest number of participants compared to any other facility in the nation. We are also one of the few MTFs offering Maternal Fetal Medicine specialty care and an embedded Level II Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Bottom line: Taking care of families impacts readiness and our families enable us to be the most capable military force in the world. We will continue to strive at improving our care and service for every patient, every day. Our families deserve nothing less.

The Navy Medicine enterprise, like the rest of the MHS, is committed to becoming a High Reliability Organization (HRO) emphasizing quality outcomes, patient safety and a robust process improvement system supported by leadership. This shift from health care to health is perfectly suited for the MHS, where we practice as an integrated care enterprise that can focus on healthy outcomes and evidenced-based treatments. I am extremely proud to note that at NHCL,

we took a page from The Joint Commission Center for Transforming Healthcare and begin each day with a focus on quality and patient safety. Our entire Board of Directors meets each morning to discuss any safety concerns that may have occurred in the past 24 hours, and any safety concerns which could potentially affect patient care in the next 24 hours. This commitment to quality and environment of collaboration, similar to what is happening at many other institutions across the MHS, has allowed our organization to move above many nationally-recognized quality and safety benchmarks while maintaining an extremely high patient satisfaction rating. Most importantly, since our system of remuneration is not about profit, it allows us to uniquely focus on the most important thing - the next patient that walks into our facility.

It is critical to note the importance of NHCL, given our location in Eastern North Carolina, has become a leader in quality, safety, education, training and research and play a critically-important role in a medically-underserved area of our country. We have wonderfully talented and dedicated civilian medical partners in Jacksonville and the surrounding areas, who are truly committed to our Marines and their families; however, our community does not have the medical infrastructure which may exist in other metropolitan areas. Our closest trauma center is 90 minutes away and some specialty and subspecialty care is not easy to access in this area. Our Managed Care Support Contractor, which is responsible for coordinating the civilian health network of providers to support our military families, fully understands our importance here and has indicated there is no way this region could absorb and support the medical demand without our hospital.

Navy Medicine realized the need for improvements in the specialty care provided at NHCL and following the CONUS Hospital Optimization plan, realigned resources to better suit the existing and emerging missions, as well as made adjustments based on what the civilian medical

community could support. Consequently, over the past two years, NHCL significantly increased in size, capacity and capability.

NCHL's capabilities have simultaneously grown through the increased integration of technology. We have launched a Tele-ICU project virtually connecting our Intensive Care Unit directly with Naval Medical Center San Diego, allowing their team to digitally collaborate with our providers ensuring real time assessment, consultation and critical care support. Through digital radiology, we are able to move images and not patients, instantaneously transmitting images between our many Branch Health Clinics, our main hospital and specialists and sub-specialists at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth. Integrating Tele-Pharmacy has also allowed us to maintain the highest levels of quality and service at multiple pharmacies located across the 246 square miles of the base.

We have also become leaders in combat-related research making real battlefield differences with 25 current research protocols and 18 active institutional collaborations. We have expanded our pain management services, which not only serve the health needs of our beneficiaries, but also allow for the coordination and management of complex poly-pharmacy cases, while mitigating the possibility of medication abuse. Our pain management case manager identifies high utilizers through a monthly review of the Controlled Drug Management and Analysis Reporting Tool (CDMART) provided by the DHA's Pharmacoeconomic Center. . Patients who are identified as having chronic pain and potential drug misuse/abuse are then referred to the pain clinic for comprehensive management to include: (1) sole provider agreement;(2) periodic urine drug screening for controlled substance compliance monitoring; and, (3) assigning a TRICARE prescription restriction form to limit member to receiving controlled substances from the MTF pharmacy for monitoring. NHCL staff collaborates with II MEF medical officer assets to make them aware of their high-risk active duty members as well. NHCL is uniquely prepared

to meet the mental health needs of our operational forces, with over 60 licensed independent mental health professionals and a 20-bed inpatient mental health unit. We recently opened the first sleep medicine center in this region.

Our Graduate Medical Education (GME) programs are a vital training base for Navy Medicine. If they are no longer available, it would be difficult to re-establish that lost capability. Our teaching program at NHCL, indicative of others throughout Navy Medicine, is a robust, dynamic institution, offering unique training opportunities in military medicine and research. It has received the highest level of certification by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical (ACGME) Education and has achieved an unprecedented 100 percent board pass rate for our residents for four consecutive years. As previously discussed, the realignment of resources to meet mission requirements has led to the expansion of our Family Medicine Residency program by 50 percent and our growth has occurred simultaneously with more than 30 percent increase of our enrolled patient population, to include a doubling of our enrolled retired beneficiaries. Their re-affiliation with our hospital has the dual benefit of improving the acuity and complexity of cases for our interns, residents and specialists, while more importantly, allowing our team to care for those who have previously served and who are deserving of best this nation can offer.

One of the most unique aspects of NHCL is also one of the most effective. Our Intrepid Spirit Concussion Recovery Center, which has no counterpart in the civilian health care setting, is part of the National Intrepid Center of Excellence network. Our Center offers exceptional care and support of our warfighters afflicted with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and uses an innovative patient-centered approach. It is a holistic, integrated, interdisciplinary treatment program that provides care for the warfighter and their families. At the Intrepid Spirit, the providers are organized into teams and co-located in one building. Care is both physically and

organizationally located in one place that is built around the needs of the patients and their families. Teams bring 10 different specialties to the patient, including Neurology, Neuropsychology, Audiology, Physical and Occupational Therapy, Neuro Optometry as well as incorporating Complimentary Alternative Medicine (CAM) techniques.

Care at the Intrepid Spirit Center is tailored to meet the unique needs of these warrior athletes, whose duties require them to be able to perform at a very high level. The emphasis is on rehabilitation and the goal is to return them to the highest level of function possible, with minimal medication use. To help accomplish this goal CAM techniques like yoga, acupuncture, and other non-pharmacological modalities are an integral part of the Intrepid Spirit program. To date, approximately two thousand warfighters have gone through the program, and more than 90 percent of them, at least from the standpoint of TBI, have been returned to full duty.

In summary, we are a critical and integral part of the greatest and most highly-capable Navy and Marine Corps team the world has ever known. Our hospital serves as the readiness platform for the staff assigned to our hospital, the Sailors and Marines stationed in this area, as well as their families. We will continue to provide forward-deployable expeditionary medical capability while maintaining the highest levels of readiness. We appreciate the opportunity to share with you what we do at Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune. We are grateful for your support of military medicine and I look forward to answering your questions.