

Learning to Care for Those in Harm's Way



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Ursano to retire as Uniformed Services University Psychiatry Department Chair

Bethesda, MD – World renowned psychiatrist Dr. Robert J. Ursano announced he will retire as chair of the Department of Psychiatry at the F. Edward Hebert School of Medicine of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) after more than 24 years in the position. Ursano will remain as the director of USU's Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS).

Under Ursano's leadership, the psychiatry department has become a research powerhouse. In addition to intramural research in basic and clinical sciences and the neurosciences, the department has maintained active research funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, National Institute of Drug Abuse, National Science Foundation, the Department of the Army and the Department of the Air Force. The department has ongoing collaborations with the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, and multiple universities around the country. Ursano's flagship study, the DoD-funded Army STARRS (Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Servicemembers) and its successor, STARRS-LS (an ongoing, longitudinal study) are generating practical, actionable information on risk reduction and resilience building to prevent suicide, suicide-related behavior, and other behavioral health issues in the military.

The department supports clinical psychiatry clerkships and research electives for third- and fourth-year uniformed medical students and teaches human behavior and ethics courses to second-year medical students. The department also provides psychiatry residency training through its affiliations with Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and graduate medical education in the National Capital Consortium.

Ursano also established CSTS in 1987. CSTS is a national resource for disaster responders and for communities addressing natural disasters, community violence, terrorism, body recovery and worker stress and public health threats, among many others. CSTS has assisted the Department of Defense in leading the nation in trauma-informed care, and rapidly moving findings from bench to bedside and from war to disaster.

Ursano graduated the University of Notre Dame, magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa. He graduated from Yale University School of Medicine on an Air Force health professions scholarship. He completed his psychiatry residency at Wilford Hall U.S. Air Force Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, and later returned to Yale for his fellowship training. His first assignment was at the U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine in San Antonio, where he began his work on traumatic stress, working with Air Force Vietnam-era Prisoners of War. He joined the USU faculty in 1979 and became chair of the department in 1992. Ursano spent more than 20 years on active duty and retired from the Air Force at the rank of Colonel in 1992.

School of Medicine Dean Dr. Art Kellermann announced he will convene a search committee for a successor to Ursano, who will remain as chair until a successor is named.

“Bob Ursano has made tremendous and lasting contributions to the University, to military health and to science. I am not only grateful for his 24 years as an exceptional chair, I am deeply grateful for his willingness to keep leading CSTS,” Kellermann said.

"I look forward to continuing the work of the department from the vantage of scientist and professor in the department and the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress. It is always an honor and pleasure to be part of USU's mission," said Ursano.

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About the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, founded by an act of Congress in 1972, is the nation's federal health sciences university and the academic heart of the Military Health System. USU students are primarily active duty uniformed officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Public Health Service who receive specialized education in tropical and infectious diseases, TBI and PTSD, disaster response and humanitarian assistance, global health, and acute trauma care. A large percentage of the university's more than 5,300 physician and 1,000 advanced practice nursing alumni are supporting operations around the world, offering their leadership and expertise. USU also has graduate programs in biomedical sciences and public health committed to excellence in research, and in oral biology. The University's research program covers a wide range of clinical and other topics important to both the military and public health. For more information about USU and its programs, visit www.usuhs.edu.