USU Brigade Commander, COL Wempe

By MC3 Jeff Hopkins 
Assistant Editor, Office of External Affairs

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) said farewell to its outgoing brigade commander, LTC John Maurer, MSC, USA, and welcomed COL John M. Wempe, MC, USA, as its newest leader August 2007.

Wempe was born in St. Paul, Minn., and grew up in the southeastern part of South Dakota, in the small town of Parkston, a town of about 1,500 people. The son of a large animal veterinarian and a homemaker, Wempe was one of eight kids; he has six brothers and two sisters.

Wempe said his decision to be a veterinarian was largely due to his father’s occupation, as well as two of his brothers’ accessions to medical school.

“Of the six boys in our family, five of them have served in the military; two in the Army, three in the Air Force. Two of my brothers did the Health Professinals Scholarship Program for the Air Force, one is still on active duty, and my older brother is a retired pilot,” Wempe said.

Wempe said that part of the reason he joined the Army was that at the time he finished veterinary school, the Army was offering lab positions in the Veterinary Corps, and he thought it would be a place to start.

“Never did I think it would become a career; I thought it was going to be a three year stint, and then I’d go back to a civilian vet lab and work,” Wempe said. “Then about six months after I was in, the Army offered me an opportunity to pursue a graduate degree. I agreed, and they sent me to the University of California, Davis for a masters program there. I was fortunate enough to complete a masters degree of preventive veterinary medicine, and a masters of science in comparative pathology, which took me about 16 months.”

Wempe says that he values his family above all else. He met his wife Dianne while completing his undergraduate studies at South Dakota State in Brookings; they have been married for more than 32 years. She graduated a year after him, and he continued his studies in veterinary medicine at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kan. They have four children, two daughters and two sons.

“I think the most important thing that my wife and I have done is hopefully instilled in our own kids a sense of service.” Wempe said. “Both of our daughters were ROTC nursing students at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb., and both served in the Army Nurse Corps. One of them was an operating room nurse at Walter Reed, and the other was deployed to Kuwait, and it’s pretty amazing that some of the patients our daughter Kelly saw in Kuwait, our daughter Kerry would see when they came to Walter Reed. Our sons are both graduates of the United States Military Academy; Ryan graduated in 2005, and is currently serving as a military intelligence officer in Sadr City, Iraq. He should hopefully come home around Christmas, after a 15 month deployment. Our youngest son graduated from West Point this last May, and he’s doing his aviation training at Fort Rutger.”

“Since 1996, we’ve moved eight times, and our kids have hung in there through all that and still have decided it’s important to serve. That’s what makes me the most proud,” Wempe said.

Wempe said that what he has enjoyed the most in his career in the Army has been the people he has met during each assignment.

“I think what I have enjoyed most, and will sound cliché, but it’s really the people you get the opportunity to meet along the way, and you kind of get to know what they’ve done,” Wempe said. “It’s kind of a brotherhood and sisterhood of common experiences.”

Wempe has served in a variety of positions during his service in the Army, and identifies his time as the commander of the Army Medical Department Activity (MEDDAC) at Fort Drum, New York.

“Right before I came here I was commander of the MEDACC at Fort Drum, NY. I enjoyed that position very much, again, because of the people that were there, and the mission of supporting the 10th Mountain Division, a heavily deployed division; having an opportunity to take care of not just the soldiers, but their families, who are very much a part of the situation we’re in right now,” Wempe said. “They’re a big piece of it; if family members feel like they’re taken care of, and people care about them, that’s why they’re willing to let their spouse stay in.”

Wempe said he feels honored to take on the responsibilities as leader of the university’s brigade.

“I feel very fortunate that I was selected for this position,” Wempe said. “At the change of command, I spoke about the opportunity to prepare people to go into harm’s way and take care of those people who go and put their lives on the line for our nation, and I think it’s one of the best jobs a person could have.”
Medical Conference Speeds Up the Integration Process

By Chief Mass Communication Specialist (AW) Paul DeLaughter, NNMC Journal editor

Military medical leaders from the National Capital Region met Oct. 9 and 10 during phase two of the National Capital Area’s Health care Synchronization Conference with the intent of furthering the integration of regional medical resources.

“[Defense Secretary Robert Gates] has said time and time again that - other than the survival of our nation, which is dependent [upon] winning this Global War on Terrorism - there is nothing more important to the Defense Department than the care of our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines,” Assistant Defense Secretary for Health Affairs Dr. S. Ward Casscells said. Casscells said people should not be opposed to integrating military medical resources.

“[Integration] is not about cost-cutting. It’s not about centralization. It’s not about the Defense Department sticking its nose into the services business,” Casscells said. “It’s about going from good to great. Good to great in patient care. Good to great in quality of care, good to great in our teaching and our research.”

“Combining medical capabilities in the National Capital Region will allow us to provide all of the services that our casualties need,” said RADM John Mateczun, who is awaiting Congressional confirmation to lead Joint Task Force National Capital Area-Medical. “Organizing [the military branches together] will mean we don’t have redundant capabilities. Also, integration provides distinct advantages, especially in specialized areas of care.”

One of the major hurdles for the new task force is overseeing the completion of the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda. The new medical facility will be a joint command and will require major construction, renovation and re-organization. “There are cultural differences in the way [the military branches] handle system processes and the ancillary things that go with moving patients,” said National Naval Medical Center Commander RADM Richard Jeffries. “Getting [patients] to the proper rehab or to the Veterans Affairs centers - and other things like that - have not come together in one standardized process yet.”

Select leaders from the Army, Navy and Air Force worked in small work groups during the conference to help diagnose and overcome challenges. “[This conference] is something we have needed to do, it’s in the right timeframe and in the right direction with the new [joint task force],” Jeffries said. “[The conference] has gone a long way to [standardizing] this new national military medical command.”

The co-creator of the Drexler/Sibbet Team Performance Model, a toolset for managers to create and sustain team performance, served as guest speaker for the conference and said cohesiveness is paramount in developing a strong foundation and framework for building successful teams.

Allen Drexler, who created the model along with Russ Forrester and David Sibbet, supervised as military medical leaders applied the model to the National Capital Region integration.

“It is hard getting [different] cultures to work effectively as one and still maintain their identity,” Drexler said. “[The joint task force] is inventing something that has never been done before and it takes time.”

“We are getting more people on the same page and we are finding out where the big challenges are that need to be overcome,” Jeffries said. “We are starting to find out what type of leadership the joint task force needs to form that will get us to the final product within the timeframe set by Congress.”

Conference organizer Air Force Col John Murray said the meeting was a historical opportunity for National Capital Region military leaders to work collaboratively for a world class health care system.

“Interoperability is key to our national security. Unless we are joint, we’re not really going to be interoperable,” Mateczun said. “Each [military branch] is able to bring its own unique capabilities to the fight. But, through the combination of these capabilities, we’ll be able to achieve the end state of the mission that we need. We will be more than the sum of our parts.”

USU’s Fighting Docs

By MC3 Jeff Hopkins
Assistant Editor, Office of External Affairs

Hockey season is underway, and the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences’ (USU) hockey team, the “Fighting Docs” is already skating its way to victory.

“Anyone can play,” said Capt Tim Gerlach, USMC, USU Headquarters Company commander, the team’s coordinator, manager, and captain. “Faculty, staff, students, dependents, friends and family. Our team currently consists of military and civilian students, staff and faculty.”

We play teams from all around DC, Maryland, Northern VA, and the ability of players range from novice to advanced.

“We’re in the Gardens Ice House Adult Hockey League,” Gerlach said. “In the whole adult hockey league, there are 65 teams, with upwards of 25 players each, which makes the complex where we play the fifth largest adult hockey league in the country.”

Gerlach said the benefits of a university hockey team are numerous, both for the body and the mind.

“I just love playing on a team with a bunch of other people that have the same love as I do,” Gerlach said. “It’s an awesome workout, a great stress reliever, and a great study break and stress reliever for the students; it’s also a great way for the students

military commissioned, enlisted and civilian staff, military faculty, civilian staff, faculty, and military and civilian students.

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Eleanor S. Metcalf, Ph.D., professor of Microbiology and Immunology and associate dean for Graduate Education, has been a faculty member here at USU for 30 years. In addition to her responsibilities as associate dean, she oversees a small research program which is engaged in the study of the pathogenesis of Salmonella bacteria.

Metcalf was born in New Wilmington, Pa. She grew up in Baltimore, Md. where her mother continues to live. She received an A.B. in Chemistry from Ohio Wesleyan University; an M.S. in Microbiology from the University of Michigan; and a Ph.D. in Immunology from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine.

Metcalf was recruited to USU as an assistant professor in the summer of 1977, when the university needed basic science faculty to teach the first class of medical students. “When I first arrived, the university was still under construction” Dr. Metcalf said. “I was actually interviewed by Dr. Jay Sanford, then president and dean of USU, on the second floor of People’s Drug Store in downtown Bethesda. “USU has really grown, from a class of 31 students to 175 medical students during the 30 years that I’ve been here,” she said. She also recounted that at the time she was hired, the university was housed at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology on WRAMC’s campus. When Building A was completed, the entire Medical School moved into this one building until Buildings B,C, and D were completed.” During that time, both the faculty and the medical school class were small. “When I was hired, I gave all of the lectures in the Immunology block of Medical Microbiology course because the department had only one faculty member in each of the areas of concentration within Microbiology.” She noted that “Graduate Education was combined with Graduate Medical Education for the first few years after she arrived but the two offices were eventually separated, and the Graduate Programs in Biomedical Sciences was developed as a single entity with responsibility for all of the masters and doctoral programs at the university. In the intervening years, Metcalf has continued to run her research lab, as well as to teach both medical students and graduate students. In 1999, she became the first director of the Emerging Infectious Diseases Graduate Program. In 2005, she was selected to be associate dean of Graduate Education.

“One of the things that haven’t changed over time is the friendliness of and interactions among students and faculty,” Metcalf said. “I have made many good friends and lost several treasured colleagues during my 30 years here at the university. While we have an outstanding academic environment, I think it’s the people that make USU unique and is the major reason that I am still happy to be part of this community.”

Get up, Get out, Get fit

USU Students teach

Medical students from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences went to Kensington-Parkwood Elementary School for a program called “Get up, Get out, Get Fit” Tuesday morning. 2LT Rebecca Ortolano, second year medical student, arranged the program. “It was a lot of fun,” she said. “It’s nice to step out of the medical school bubble, I used to do a lot of community service in high school and as an undergrad, and it’s good to get back into that.” This was the first time being done at the school, and USU students plan to do this again. “We’re trying to get contacts to other schools and even middle schools,” said Ortolano. “Most of the USU students that heard about this are working through the Family Medical Interest Group and Pediatrics Interest Group. Many of the first years were interested in participating also.” “What we have in mind for the future is having a lot of different teaching modules, nutrition, label reading, food guide pyramid and different exercises” she said. “Depending on the amount of class rooms will depend on the classes taught.”

Ortolano said the reason the Family Medical Interest Group was interested in choosing nutrition and fitness as a target was to acknowledge childhood obesity and contribute to the community as a medical school and to help address the issue.
USU Researchers Demonstrate Novel Strategy to Inactivate Encephalitis Virus

A collaborative team of scientists from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) have developed a novel strategy to inactivate highly virulent Venezuelan equine encephalitis virus (VEEV) that can infect and kill both animals and humans.

In an article published in *Biochem Biophys Res Commun*, April 26, 2007, Dr. Radha Maheshwari, professor of Pathology at USU, along with graduate student Anuj Sharma, reported the novel approach to inactivate VEEV. VEEV has been identified as an emerging infectious disease and has been developed as a bio-warfare agent and may be a potential biological terror agent.

The current study has important implications for the development of efficient VEEV vaccine. The results show that complete inactivation of VEEV can be achieved using a novel molecule that can penetrate into the virus envelope and target the virus envelope proteins that are vital for initiation of virus infection of the host cell. This inactivation of the virus is achieved while maintaining the integrity of the virus which is vital towards development of a vaccine against any virus. This study has significant implications as this novel strategy of inactivation may be used for a large number of enveloped viruses of military and civilian importance.

There is no specific therapy for the treatment of VEEV infection or *togaviruses* as such and there is currently no FDA approved vaccine for VEEV prophylaxis. The current experimental vaccine which is under investigational new drug status, has limited use due to non-responders and residual virulence.

Novel Phytochemical Agent Enhances, Improves Process of Wound Healing

Researchers at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) have identified a novel phytochemical agent that enhances and improves the process of wound healing in normal and immune compromised people.

In an article published in the March 2007 edition of the *Journal of Planta Medica*, Dr. Radha Maheshwari, professor of Pathology at USU, along with Anuj Sharma, graduate student and other colleagues, reported a novel compound Picroliv obtained from the roots of a plant Picrorhiza kurrooa enhances the rate of wound healing by principally enhancing the restoration of the blood supply to the damaged tissue.

Previous work from Dr. Maheshwari’s laboratory has shown that Picroliv also protects from the injuries induced by hypoxia and reoxygenation and upregulates the expression of vascular endothelial growth factor in human umbilical vein endothelial cells and of insulin-like growth factor in rats during hypoxia. These findings suggest that Picroliv could be developed as a therapeutic angiogenic agent for the restoration of the blood supply in diseases involving inadequate blood supply such as limb ischemia, ischemic myocardium and wound healing.

This work supported by funding from National Institutes of Health has important implications in understanding the underlying process important for wound healing and developing agents that can enhance these processes. Wounds and their treatment remain a major area of research for military combat causality and civilian traumatic injuries and this research identifies a potential therapeutic compound that may be developed for treatment of wounds.

Before... ...and After

Courtyard Reaches Completion

The construction on the brick façades in the USU courtyard has reached completion, and the maze of caution-tape and barriers have disappeared. The construction, which began in 2005 consisted of removing and replacing the brick facings of each building. The façade (originally designed for the arid climate of California) was not designed to drain water from behind the bricks. Over the years, water has been seeping behind the bricks and freezing and thawing has caused the bricks to slowly push away from the buildings. The insulation behind the façade had also deteriorated due to the water seepage, which led to an increase in air conditioning and heating costs.
The 2008 elections are scheduled to officially begin with several Presidential Primaries in January 2008. Primary elections play an important role in the electoral process, because the names that appear on the general election ballot on Nov. 4, 2008 are the candidates that were chosen during the primary election process. Voters in state primaries select their party’s candidates for state and federal offices such as President, Vice President, Governor, U.S. Senator, and member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Primary elections will start earlier than ever in 2008. The District of Columbia, Florida, Michigan, and South Carolina will hold their Presidential Preference Primaries in January 2008, 20 other states will conduct their Presidential Preference Primaries in February 2008. The remaining states will have their primary elections shortly after.

The absentee voting process permits citizens covered by the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act, which includes members of the U.S. Uniformed Services, and their family members, who will be away from their legal residence/polling place on Election Day, to register, request a ballot, and vote through the mail or an alternative method. Absentee voters should request ballots at least 60 days before the election. A citizen must register to vote in his or her state of legal residence. In order to register and/or vote absentee, he or she must carefully, legibly, and accurately complete a Federal Post Card Application, Standard Form 76 (FPCA, SF 76) and submit it to the local election official serving their legal residence. The local election official will process the FPCA to determine if the citizen meets the jurisdiction’s residency requirements. The local election official will contact the voter if there are any questions during the process or if the form is not acceptable. For this reason, it is critical for the citizen to provide an e-mail address and other contact information on the FPCA. The local election official will send the citizen a blank ballot. Upon receipt, the citizen records his or her vote, and returns the ballot as soon as possible to ensure the state’s ballot receipt deadline is met.

An online version of the Federal Post Card Application (SF-76) can be obtained at: [http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/onlinef pca.pdf](http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/onlinef pca.pdf). All states and territories accept a printed copy of the online version of the SF-76 form, except Guam and American Samoa. You can fill out the SF-76, print it, and mail it to your local election official. State absentee registration and voting procedures, which provide state-specific guidance and mailing addresses, are available at: [http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/vag.html#ch3](http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/vag.html#ch3). If desired, you can mail your SF-76 form using the postage paid envelope available at: [http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/returnenvelope.pdf](http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/returnenvelope.pdf). This online postage paid envelope can be printed on a No. 10 envelope or printed and taped to the front of it.

If you require any voting assistance whatsoever, please contact any of the following USUHS Voting Assistance Officers: LCDR Mike Kemper (295-9434 or mkemper@usuhs.mil); ET1 Bryan Washington (295-9107 or bwashington@usuhs.mil); or IT2 Greg-
USU News Briefs

**2008 Field Exercises:** Operations Bushmaster and Kerkesner will be conducted from July 10-25, 2008 at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa. These exercises are unique to our university and require the support of all university uniformed personnel. Only emergency leave will be granted during this time frame as there are over 135 uniformed personnel (not including evaluators) needed to support this mission.

**Drinking Responsibly:** According to Dr. Alexander Wagenaar, Director, Alcohol and Other Drug Epidemiology Program, University of Minnesota School of Public Health, alcohol was involved in nearly 32% of aviation deaths, 62% of drownings, 48% of falls, 54% of fires, and 40% of industrial injuries. Highway crashes involving drivers (and pedestrians) who are impaired by alcohol and/or other drugs are not considered "accidents," as they are preventable.

**Free Military Handbooks:** There are several very useful United States Military Handbooks available to active duty military, veterans, and dependents on topics such as pay, allowances, taxes, health care and TRICARE benefits, Veterans and Social Security Benefits, travel, transportation, SBP, retirement, Space-A, installation listings, statistical data and more. These handbooks are designed to help military personnel by giving them the most accurate and complete information available anywhere. To access these handbooks, please click on the following link: http://www.militaryhandbooks.com/.

**Enlisted Social Committee Support:** All enlisted personnel are encouraged to support the enlisted social committee by informing personnel of their purpose, which is to facilitate effective and efficient mission accomplishment by functioning as an executive working group to foster esprit de corps and provide a means for morale and welfare recreational activities. The morale of the unit is largely dependent on the chain of command and their support of enlisted personnel functions. All E-6 and below personnel of the Headquarters Company are members. The ESC elections will be held on Nov. 6 at 9 a.m. in the USU Dining Facility. Maximum participation is requested for USU to have a successful program. Thus far, the ESC has completed the following activities and fundraisers: Valentine’s Day candy grams and baskets, a Memorial Day picnic, a USUHS picnic, and a book sale. Please come show your support!

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**HOCKEY, from page 1**

to get to know the staff in a down to earth manner, form some good professional relationships, and give the staff a window to get more in tune with the students lives. It’s also a great privilege to be able to represent the university out in the national capital area.”

The team plays in gold and black jerseys with the USU logo on them, but what is conspicuously missing is a mascot.

“The team name is the Fighting Docs, and if we did have a mascot, his name would be ‘Doc.’ We do need to come up with a mascot to bring to games, or put on the bench. Anyone wishing to contribute a mascot idea is more than welcome.”

While a mascot would be nice, Gerlach said more importantly what the team would like to see is more fan participation at games.

“We would love to have fans come out and support our games,” Gerlach said. “Basically, we would encourage everyone to come out to our Sunday, Nov. 18 game at 2:50 p.m. in the Ice House’s Patrick arena.”

To find out more about the complex where the Fighting Docs play, visit www.thegardensicehouse.com. Within the site is a league Website for adult hockey, with daily updated stats and standings, along with the progress of the hockey team.

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**Dr. D.C. in The Fighting Docs**

By MCSN Raul Zamora
### October

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>28</td>
<td>LRC Training Classes: Introduction to Excel. Register online at: <a href="http://training.lrc.usuhs.mil/lib/training_reg.php">http://training.lrc.usuhs.mil/lib/training_reg.php</a>. Please call Nancy Morell at 319-4039 or Linda Spitzer at 295-3357 if you have questions. 10 a.m. - Noon LRC.</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Halloween Observed Seminar “Genetics of ALS” by Ryan J. Traynor, M.D., MMSC, MRCPi, Clinical Associate NINDS, NIH Bethesda, Md. 3:30 p.m. Lecture Room A.</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>LRC Training Classes: EndNote Advanced. Register online at: <a href="http://training.lrc.usuhs.mil/lib/training_reg.php">http://training.lrc.usuhs.mil/lib/training_reg.php</a>. Please call Nancy Morell at 319-4039 or Linda Spitzer at 295-3357 if you have questions. Noon - 1 p.m. and 5 - 6 p.m. LRC.</td>
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### Veterans Day

- Neuroscience Program 17th Annual Open House and Poster Session 3:30 p.m. Building B Lobby.

### Thanksgiving

- Thanksgiving