



# Navy Medicine

## *Commander's Guidance*

For over 240 years, our Navy and Marine Corps has been the cornerstone of American security and prosperity. Navy Medicine has been there every day as an integral part of that team. We continue to stand the watch today...at sea, above the sea, below the sea, and ashore. Our care is second to none, culminating in the highest combat survival in recorded history during the last conflict. Around the world, men and women are alive today because of the dedication, commitment, and selfless service of Navy Medicine. In every location, from sick bay to our clinics, hospitals, research labs, training commands, preventive medicine units, and our supporting commands and elements .... America's families sleep well knowing that Navy Medicine has the watch and their loved ones will receive the best care our nation can offer, today and tomorrow.

As I look ahead, the world in which we operate is increasingly complex and uncertain. We cannot rest on our laurels. Change is the norm in every area touching our patients, our team, and our mission. Success depends on how well we adapt to those changes and prevail in continuing to honor the trust placed in our hands every day by America's families ... to do all in our power to return their loved ones home safely. From a geopolitical perspective, while the world is far from stable and we must be prepared to respond globally in any theater, our nation's focus is increasing on the Pacific, among other regions. This is the domain of the Navy and Marine Corps. Combat in that domain will be very different than the last ground war. The high combat survival we attained in that war was the direct result of three factors: (1) the heroic performance of our Corpsmen who kept patients alive to get them to our surgical teams; (2) forward resuscitative surgery near the battlespace; and (3) air superiority and rapid evacuation to definitive care. We cannot assume all of these advantages in the next conflict, especially if conflict is at sea.

We have not fought a true air-sea battle since World War II. The training, preparation, equipment, and support required by our operational and deployed medical personnel will be very different than that required for a ground war. Disaggregated operations at sea and ashore may challenge us in how we provide quick access to resuscitative surgery or evacuation to definitive care. To this end, survival may depend on our distribution of medical capabilities and, equally important, the skills and capabilities of onboard medical teams for extended periods until casualties can be evacuated. Among other issues we must work, this will require us to fundamentally re-examine the training and preparation of our people to ensure they are completely prepared and ready to save lives, sustaining that high combat survival under very different circumstances.

Further, disease non-battle injury accounted for 70% of all theater evacuations in the last conflict. The health threats in other theaters are very different than those in the Middle East. Robust research, development, rapid delivery of new capabilities, along with strong ongoing preventive health support will be critical to countering new and emerging health threats of today and tomorrow. Finally, peace and stability will require strong and enduring medical partnerships and alliances, not only to support operations and defend our mutual interests, but also to rapidly respond to natural disasters and other destabilizing events when needed. We are one of the few nations that maintain a sizeable, ready-to-immediately-surge standing medical force to both support operational contingencies and rapid disaster response. Because of this, we will continue to be “on call” and will need to grow our partnerships and capabilities with our sister services as a more capable Joint Force, our allies, academia, and industry to fulfill our responsibilities, save lives, and preserve peace and security.

To protect America and defend our interests worldwide, today’s Navy and Marine Corps team is the most highly trained, educated, and specialized force in our nation’s history. Every Sailor and Marine is essential to the mission. More than ever, Navy Medicine is critical and essential to ensuring they are healthy, ready, and on the job because OPTEMPO is high and will remain so. We must also keep their families healthy and resilient: our Sailors and Marines cannot focus on their mission if they are worried about their families. To keep them healthy, we must partner with them and meet their needs in ways convenient and acceptable to them. We will be challenged in this effort. Resource constraints, evolving trends in American healthcare, and other challenges will all confront us. Further, the vast majority of the uniformed Navy and Marine Corps force today are Millennials. Their expectations, and that of their peers, are fundamentally changing how healthcare is delivered and we must adapt to that reality and meet their healthcare needs in ways acceptable to them or we will become irrelevant to their health. Convenience, the experience of care, and technology are what drive their healthcare choices today. In the past, we focused on productivity and workload. While those remain important, they are not solely the path to future success. Focusing on doing what’s right for our patients in ways convenient and acceptable to them, while continuing to treat them as we would want our loved ones treated is the path to success. The experience elsewhere is clear: focus on doing what’s right for the patient and treating them as family .... and compliance and outcomes improve while care costs decrease. Our force will be healthier and we will be better resource stewards during times of resource constraint ahead.

As such, we are going to shift from a productivity focus to one of value, but value from the perspective of the patient. While we must continue to aggressively and efficiently manage our resources, our main focus will be on providing the right care for our patients and in ways acceptable to them. Less than 1% of our nation has ever served in uniform or with the military. Our military and civilians on our team and for whom we care share a common bond of service and sacrifice for freedom’s sake. We are a family united by that common bond. As such, caring for our patients is caring for our family. We honor that trust placed in our hands when we do for them as we would do for our family. If we do this, we will continue to be their provider of choice and remain relevant to their health and readiness while keeping them healthy and ready to do our nation’s work.

Many patients in our primary care clinics don’t need to see a provider. To this end, it makes little sense to make them come to the clinic if we can better meet their needs in other ways. Further, their health

benefits today give them more choice than ever before. Changes in American healthcare are facilitating that choice: the explosion of minute clinics, urgent care clinics, virtual healthcare, and concierge services have given our patients more convenience options and choice than ever. But, care based on convenience increases the risk that their care will become fragmented and driven by other factors in the civilian sector while we will concurrently lose visibility and influence over their health and readiness. We lose relevance if we lose visibility or influence over the health of the force. We will also lose those patients we critically need for our staff to preserve their skills and competencies for the next conflict. Our Corpsmen are graduating A-school with limited clinical experience. Many of our new nurses are coming on active duty with limited critical care experience, primarily because of advances in medicine. Yet, the first time they see a truly complex patient shouldn't be on deployment. We need patients in our hospitals and clinics to provide that robust clinical experience they need before deployment.

We serve to save lives and do what's right for our patients to keep them healthy and this will always be our true north. In this we have an enormous advantage: we are not driven by productivity, reimbursement or profit, but only by our commitment to the health of our family. To this end, we cannot make our patients come see us when not required or get their care from us when it is convenient for us. They will seek healthcare from others if we try. Investments in virtual health and aggressive use of existing technologies to provide care without necessarily a trip to the clinic are essential to maintaining relevance to our patients. That will also create capacity in our clinics to accommodate more complex patients who are essential to our team's skills sustainment in preparation for the next conflict. When patients do require a visit, we must make it as easy as possible so we can have the patients we need. This skills sustainment of the entire medical team, from clinical to clinical support, is the key to future combat survival and I am convinced that a vibrant, busy, and robust military health system, as our training and surge platforms, is absolutely essential for both future combat survival and care of the current force and their families that is not fragmented or beyond our influence.

We will be challenged internally as well. We are in the midst of purchasing and deploying a new electronic health record. This is critical to standardizing care to best practices and providing essential decision support. The volume of medical knowledge in the world is doubling every two years. We are rapidly approaching a time when it will no longer be possible for an individual to know all things necessary to provide best care to a patient. Our commitment to providing the best care our nation can offer compels us to leverage tools like this successfully. Yet, this will be a culture change for us. Navy Medicine's ability to continue that tradition of care will depend on how well we embrace that change.

To meet the needs of our patients, it is imperative that we adopt the principles of high reliability as our operational colleagues have done. We can profitably embrace the disciplined, systematic approach of Navy Nuclear Propulsion, the complex yet fluid choreography of Carrier aviation and the unparalleled teamwork of Naval Special Warfare to improve the quality and safety of the care we provide to these warfighters and their families. As an example, further refinement and incorporation of the principles and practices of TeamSTEPPS, a program based on aviation crew resource management, into our daily work will improve the coordination, communication and collaboration essential to top quality, safe care. The dynamic and often austere setting in which we practice requires that we commit ourselves to high velocity learning, bringing all of our expertise to bear expediently and effectively to solve deck plate

challenges and then rapidly share the lessons learned throughout our entire enterprise. This will also be true for our research labs and support commands to quickly deliver new capabilities necessary for the future. Our success depends on the active engagement of everyone in Navy Medicine, from the most junior Corpsmen to our most senior flag officers in this regard. All are critical to success.

As the Commander of Navy Medicine and the senior medical advisor to the leadership of the Department of the Navy, I have shared and discussed these issues with our Navy Medicine Flag and Senior Executive Service wardroom and solicited their thoughts and recommendations, captured here. Based on their outstanding perspectives and recommendations, as I survey the sea state and take a bearing to chart the course ahead, I have approved three goals for Navy Medicine, with supporting objectives:

1. READINESS: We save lives wherever our forces operate – at and from the sea
  - a. Ensure the medical capabilities of our operational units and platforms are ready. We will achieve 90% readiness for tier one platforms and certify ready within 12 months
  - b. Achieve maximum future life-saving capabilities and survivability along the continuum of care.
  - c. Provide a robust, relevant clinical experience for our force to preserve their clinical and life-saving skills and competencies
  - d. Develop a holistic approach to achieve medical capabilities that are ready and relevant wherever we operate, today and tomorrow.
2. HEALTH: We will provide the best care our nation can offer to Sailors, Marines, and their families to keep them healthy, ready, and on the job.
  - a. We will treat our patients as “family” and enhance access to care.
  - b. Eliminate patient harm by anticipating, identifying, resolving, and sharing best practices and lessons learned, enabling us to lead the nation in quality and safety.
  - c. We will rapidly pilot a Value Based Care and develop patient-centric measures of success to guide future enterprise efforts, rapidly disseminating successes across Navy Medicine.
  - d. We will attack and remove sources of inefficiency in returning our limited duty patients to duty.

3. PARTNERSHIPS: We will expand and strengthen our partnerships to maximize readiness and health.
  - a. We will produce a strategic partnering framework for Navy Medicine to guide and inform future partnerships in 2016
  - b. We will identify and remove barriers to developing partnerships
  - c. We will take a bearing on our current partnerships to ensure alignment with our framework

Our world has changed and the future presents both challenge and great opportunity. With the outstanding support and counsel of our Flag and SES Wardroom, we have reviewed and updated our Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles to reflect these goals, our priorities, and the way ahead:

Mission: Keep the Navy and Marine Corps Family Ready, Healthy, and on the job

Vision: The Navy and Marine Corps Family has the best readiness and health in the world

Guiding Principles:

1. We will continue to honor the trust that has been placed in our hands in the privilege of caring for America's sons and daughters
2. We will always be worthy of the "uniform" we wear: both military and civilian on our team carry on a tradition of caring, compassion, hope, and resolve that is the hallmark of Navy Medicine. We carry on that tradition today.
3. At all levels, we will continue to honor and be worthy of the privilege of leadership

We are a maritime nation and always have been since our founding. Our peace and prosperity are linked to the security of the seas and littorals. To protect that peace and security, America has the greatest and most capable Navy and Marine Corps the world has ever known. The role of Navy Medicine in preserving the health and fighting readiness of that force has never been greater or more critical. Across our nation, American families are looking to us and placing in our hands the health and well-being of their loved ones who stand the watch today and tomorrow. We will continue to honor that trust as we have done throughout our nation's history. This will be an "all hands on deck" effort for change will challenge us at every turn. I know we are up to that challenge and will, as we have always done, prevail for the benefit of those for whom we care. I thank each of you for your service, your sacrifice, your commitment to those who, every day, look in hope and need to Navy Medicine. I am honored to serve with you.

SG Sends

29 April 2016