

WRAIR West



How does organizational structure impact performance?

The U.S. Army Medical Research Directorate-West (USAMRD-West) continues to work with our colleagues at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) main campus on a series of studies examining the effects of organizational culture on unit climate, health and well-being, and performance.

To date, there have been multiple studies conducted throughout the operational lifecycle of Army maneuver units. The initial study

included pre-, during and post- training surveys, sleep actigraphy, after action review observations and gunnery range qualification scores with over 70 tank crews. These data have established a baseline understanding of how unit climate affects performance. To build on this understanding, a follow-on study has been initiated to observe how psychological (individual) and social (group) level mechanisms interact to influence health and performance.

This follow-on study is following an entire Armored Brigade Combat Team (BCT) throughout their deployment cycle, including capstone training exercises at the National Training Center at Ft. Irwin. Research teams from USAMRD-West and WRAIR recently returned from the fifth data collection in this longitudinal study, comprised of survey assessments, focus groups and structured interviews, and sleep actigraphy with the BCT while they were deployed in support of Operation Spartan Shield in CENTCOM. The research team also conducted surveys and interviews with the rear detachment in garrison concurrent with the deployed data collection.

Future data collections during the post-deployment phase are currently being planning for fall 2018 to assess the BCT once they return to garrison. The results of these studies will inform future interventions designed to positively influence performance and readiness through the explicit manipulation of psychosocial mechanisms.



Soldiers gather to take surveys at the National Training Center

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Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington
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Director's Corner

Since our last edition, it seems the USAMRD-West team has been in constant motion. I'd like to highlight three areas of achievement in particular.

First, USAMRD-West was, and continues to be, the main enabler for WRAIR's Culture, Performance and Health (CPH) study. As part of CPH, our team has traveled to multiple garrison and field locations to gather data on the impact of organizational culture on unit climate, health and performance. To date, more than 4,000 surveys (and counting!) have been processed in support of this effort. Findings from these studies will inform future interventions to optimize performance and readiness.



LTC Oscar Cabrera

Second, the Mental Health Advisory Team – Korea (MHAT-K) Report was recently released. This OTSG-chartered effort was led by USAMRD-West, and it set the achievement bar high. It is a clear indicator of the quality of our work and of the professionalism of the USAMRD-West team.

Lastly, our roots at JBLM are growing deeper, and our connections with partners and stakeholders are growing stronger. We will continue to deliver high-quality research to support the readiness of Service members and their Families. As always, I am honored to serve with this amazing team of professionals, as we advance WRAIR's global research enterprise.

Awards



LTC Cabrera awards SGT Thomas

SGT Tobin Thomas received the Army Commendation Medal for his service as NCOIC for the Small-Team Culture study in three countries. In Poland, SGT Thomas worked for two weeks with tank crews. He managed a research team working across extended shifts in two remote locations, collected four waves of data with 178 Soldiers and 53 crews going through gunnery qualification, and ensured performance data and AARs were accurately recorded. His unrelenting efforts led directly to the successful data collection and provided seminal data on psychological and performance metrics for Army research.

His professionalism, effective mission focus, and team management ensured successful execution of the research mission during the pilot study at Fort Carson and as part of Operation Atlantic Resolve in Poland and Germany. His leadership, performance and positive attitude set the standard for NCOICs conducting applied research. Congratulations, SGT Thomas.

Did you know...

In this past year, USAMRD-West staff led ten presentations across five countries; published two peer-reviewed manuscripts; and represented the USAMRD-West team at five conferences?



How medical providers approach readiness decisions

Military medical providers are constantly evaluating Soldiers for medical readiness based on the Army's explicit guidelines for physical and psychological fitness for duty. These providers are afforded the ability to impose and change duty limitations which can impact both mission readiness and a Service member's career. However, providers have received little training related to behavioral health readiness (BHR) decision-making, the overall military profile system, and associated regulations.



Behavioral health provider working with Soldier

Dr. McDonald's recent Military Behavioral Health publication (McDonald, Adler, & Wilk, 2017) examined these BHR decisions using a subset of 47 combat-deployed medical providers. These providers reported making more BHR decisions than concussion/traumatic brain injury (TBI) readiness decisions. Deployed providers also rated BHR decisions as more difficult than concussion/TBI readiness decisions despite reporting greater confidence and more training for BHR decisions. Furthermore, recent findings from a qualitative study of BHR decision-making in garrison, conducted by WRAIR, identified training as a main challenge and gap for providers. Together, these results underscore the need for a more comprehensive understanding of BHR decision-making among military personnel.

A recent initiative, led by WRAIR team member MAJ(P) Curley, developed a systems-based initiative to address part of this problem. This initiative was successful in enhancing awareness of current BH profile levels as well as in improving documentation and communication of BH profiles at the U.S. Army division level (Curley & Warner, 2017). As a result of these prior endeavors and in conjunction with the BH Service Line of the Office of the Surgeon General (OTSG), USAMRD-West and WRAIR have developed two BHR decision-making clinical tools and associated training to allow providers a real-time check on their clinical decision-making and skills, as well as to standardize training on current regulations as well as the BHR decision-making process.

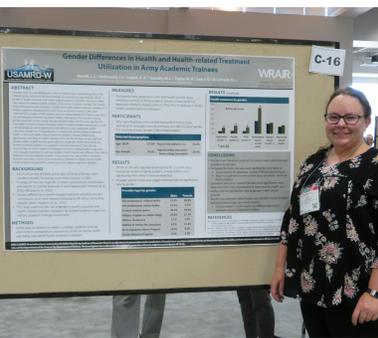
Assessing Health & Readiness in Special Operations Forces

USAMRD-West will be working with units within the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) to examine the impact of their program called the Preservation of the Force and Family (POTFF). POTFF focuses on optimizing and enhancing the readiness and performance of Special Operation Forces (SOF) across four domains: psychological, physiological, social and spiritual.

USAMRD-West is developing longitudinal surveys that will assess specific issues that impact SOF operators and support personnel, as well as the utilization of and satisfaction with the POTFF program.

Follow-on evaluations will be conducted to assess the efficacy of specific initiatives in terms of improving readiness and performance in POTFF's four domains.

Staff Spotlight



Julie Merrill

The leader of our research support team is none other than Julie. She joined the USAMRD-West team shortly after we relocated to JBLM, bringing over ten years of

experience at the main WRAIR campus as the Lead Research Associate for the Military Psychiatry branch. From survey development to data management, it is Julie who leads from behind the scenes at USAMRD-West. She is our subject matter expert on regulatory guidelines for human subjects research and oversees the processing of tens of thousands of surveys a year.

Julie has represented the unit at several conferences and led countless data collections across four states and three countries. Her contribution to Soldier readiness is innumerable.

Gaylene Stephens



What most people don't know when meeting Gaylene for the first time is that she is a survey subject matter expert. Among the USAMRD-West team, there is no one who knows the process of preparing,

packaging, and scanning surveys better than Gaylene. And for USAMRD-West's mission set, our data collections depend on information gathering using this technique.

Gaylene joined the unit while we were still in Germany and followed the organization to JBLM. She has spent seven years with the team and has worn many hats, including administrative assistant, historian, graphic designer, and now at JBLM, resident survey expert.

Behind the Scenes



Members of the WRAIR Operational Research Team, the force behind field data collections enhancing Soldier health and readiness.



ABOUT US

The U.S. Army Medical Research Directorate-West is a forward-positioned asset of WRAIR, located at Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM), Washington.

The mission of USAMRD-West is to conduct expeditionary psychological health research that enhances the readiness of Service members and Families.

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