

INTREPID VOICES

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IN RECOGNITION OF GLOBAL HEALTH ENGAGEMENT MONTH

Advancing TBI Care Excellence Across the World



The Defense Intrepid Network for TBI and Brain Health's unique program to prevent, diagnose, treat, and rehabilitate service members with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and other mental health conditions is helping to establish the same standard of care for U.S. partner nations.

Visitors from around the world tour the National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE) each year to see the Defense Intrepid Network's cutting-edge technology and treatment practices firsthand, and to learn about opportunities to work jointly on research.

"Global health engagement is built on the foundation of collaboration and partnerships," said Capt. Carlos Williams, director of the NICoE. "When we assist our partner nations in establishing and strengthening their capacity and capability to successfully care for their wounded service members, and overall population, we are ultimately supporting U.S. national security and building interoperability in times of conflict, disaster, and peace."

As a former director of the Office of Global Health Engagement



ABOVE: Left to right: Ewelina Tunia, science advisor at the Embassy of Poland; Dr. Grzegorz Cessak; Dr. Marek Migdal; Professor Radosław Sierpinski; Professor Łukasz Szumowski; Minister of Health of Poland Dr. Adam Niedzielski; Marcin Martyniak; Director of the NICoE Capt. Carlos Williams; Chief Innovations Officer of the NICoE Dr. Thomas DeGraba; and Professor Jarosław Czubak during a tour of the NICoE.

LEFT: Dr. George Smolinski with Senior Col. Rahal Hajer, chief of physical medicine and rehabilitation at the Tunis Military Hospital in Tunisia.



Left to right: Defense Health Agency Foreign Liaison Officers Lt. Col. Yasuyuki Honda of Japan; Col. Mohamed Nasri of Germany; and Col. Sandrine Duron of France pose for a picture inside the NICoE with Director Carlos Williams during a tour of the facility on Nov. 16.

(GHE) for the Navy, a U.S. health attaché, and former health policy fellow supporting the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Williams knows how improving the health of foreign populations helps transform economies and changes peoples' lives.

"The NICoE and the Defense Intrepid Network are dedicated to building collaborations that are of value to all partner nations involved and to improve the quality of care that we provide to our service members in theater and right here at home," he said.

It's why the Defense Intrepid Network's work is a key part of the Department of Defense (DOD) GHE strategy that ultimately supports the National Security and Defense Strategies.

Dr. George Smolinski, medical director of the Landstuhl TBI Program in Germany and a colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve, said, "Rehabilitation, then, is not only a moral and economic imperative, it is a national security objective consistent with current U.S. strategic guidance."



Left to right: Brig. Gen. Jack Davis, former director of Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC); Director of the NICoE Capt. Carlos Williams; Command Master Chief Petty Officer Trey Hauptmann, command senior enlisted leader of WRNMMC; Lt. Gen. Ronald Place, director of the Defense Health Agency; Federal Republic of Germany Minister for Health Karl Wilhelm Lauterbach; Director General for Public Health (German Federal Ministry of Health) Dr. Ute Teichert; and Assistant Naval Attaché (Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany) Cmdr. Philipp Mandau.

The Landstuhl TBI Program helps play a significant role in building and maintaining relationships with partner nations as the forward-deployed presence of the Defense Intrepid Network.

Smolinski is past chief of GHE for the Office of the Command Surgeon for U.S. Army Europe. Most recently, he conducted a rehabilitation site assessment in support of U.S. Africa Command in Tunis, Tunisia this summer, attended the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre Stanford Hall (UK) Multinational Rehabilitation Symposium (in support of Ukraine), and was invited to participate in the World Health Organization's Disaster Rehabilitation (Ukraine) working group.

In December, Landstuhl Regional Medical Center Deputy Director Maj. Brandon Stanley attended Estonia's 15th War and Disaster Medicine Conference. Estonia is a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) partner and is just one example of GHE cooperation between the U.S and its allies. In 2013, the U.S. renovated Estonia's amputation center and in 2019, Smolinski, along with the Office of the Command Surgeon, U.S. Air Force Europe, and seven NATO partners hosted the first International Military Rehabilitation Symposium in Tallinn, Estonia.

"Now more than ever, there is specific importance on how to provide solidarity within NATO, including for its health care systems," said Smolinski. This is done in part by the DOD and the Defense Intrepid Network's rehabilitation health care providers sharing their expertise in polytrauma, TBI, and amputation.

"The interdisciplinary care model helps foster collaboration and teamwork among health care providers. It not only helps improve patient care on an individual basis, but it also helps health care systems in our allied and partner nations," Smolinski said.

In 2017, the U.S. helped Ukraine modernize its rehabilitation capabilities, targeting a variety of conditions applicable to TBI, spinal cord injury, amputee, and polytrauma patients. Based

INTERNATIONAL VISITORS TO THE NICoE IN 2022

- Head of Defense Staff - Australia
- Advanced Aerospace Medicine for International Medical Officers - Egypt, Chile, Japan, and Taiwan
- The Republic of Korea Armed Forces Medical Command
- Ministry of Defense - Indonesia
- Chief of Naval Operations Spouse Counterpart - Israel
- Medical Officers - Italy
- Under Secretary for Health - Estonia
- Assistant to the First Lady - Ukraine
- Minister of Health - Germany
- Wounded Warrior Delegation - Italy
- State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program - Egypt
- Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs - Ukraine
- Chief of Staff of the Army Counterpart - France
- Ministry of Defense - Georgia
- Rehabilitation Center - Ukraine
- Former Olympian - Australia
- Minister of Health - Poland
- Northern Ireland and Scotland Personnel Recovery Unit
- Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Spouse Counterpart, Spouse of the Supreme Allied Commander, Transformation (NATO), and Spouse of Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
- DHA Foreign Liaison Officers - Japan, Germany, and France
- Medical Delegation - Kyrgyzstan

on the interdisciplinary care model, a team of health care professionals that included a physical medicine and rehabilitation physician, a physical therapist, an occupational therapist (and as needed a nurse case manager, a psychologist, a psychiatrist, and a speech-language pathologist) conducted multiple training sessions to help build Ukraine's military rehabilitation system.

Due to the tremendous efforts on behalf of Ukrainian military rehabilitation providers, Ukraine had a remarkable turnaround in its return to duty rates. In 2014, Ukraine had no amputee service members who were able to return to active duty. In 2021, Ukraine was able to return 20 percent of amputee service members to active duty; this is incredibly impressive as this is the same amputee return to duty rate as seen in the U.S. Armed Forces.

For further reading, After the Trauma: [The Role of Rehabilitation Medicine in U.S. DOD Global Health Engagement](#) by Smolinski.



NATIONAL INTREPID CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

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