



Press Release

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Story by Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Fincham

Leading through change

Conference discusses importance of being agile, versatile, adaptable

HEIDELBERG, Germany – Leaders from across Army Medicine gathered in Heidelberg, Germany October 31 to November 3, to participate in the Europe Regional Medical Command Leaders Conference.

With a focus on “leading through change,” the conference was designed to prepare commanders and senior enlisted leaders for management of ongoing transformation challenges and to create an environment and program for sharing best practices from throughout the field.

“These are times that require us to be agile and versatile,” explained Brig. Gen. Nadja Y. West, the commanding general of ERMC and the U.S. Army Europe command surgeon. “Can you stay agile and versatile enough to adapt to the skill set that you are required to provide? In our field we are required to provide medical support, so how do we provide that support in whatever environment that we find ourselves in?”

Discussions ranged from the importance of regular counseling Soldiers and taking care of Families, to how Army medicine remains relevant in an ever-changing Army while bridging the gap between strategic vision and successful implementation of that vision.

“In order to remain relevant we have to remember who we take care of ... keep educated on what is going on around us. We can’t simply stay in our own arena. We have to know what the important issues are, and what the next move is for those that we support so that we can stay with them,” she said.

Guest speakers at the conference included several senior Army medical officers and noncommissioned officers, many of whom are former commanders and command sergeants major from ERMC. Each of the leaders were able to provide their own unique perspective on the topic of leadership, and presented different ways to successfully approach the changes ahead.

Maj. Gen. (Retired) Carla G. Hawley-Bowland, the first female Medical Corps general in the history of the U.S. Army, said that Army Medicine must remain mission-focused in order to maintain its relevance in coming years.

“I think the Army Medical Command needs to focus on what our relevance is to the Army instead of focusing on the business of medicine and trying to compare ourselves to civilian medicine. Civilian medicine – yes, peacetime healthcare we’re very similar – but we still have to focus on our wartime mission and we never know when the next mission is going to come,” said Hawley-Bowland.

She also stressed the importance of taking care of Army Families, from both medical and Army standpoints alike.

“We need to reassure them that we’re still going to take care of them,” she said. “The main thing is to keep them informed of all the changes that are going through the Army, as well as Army Medicine, and then what it means for the Families and how we’re going to change how we take care of them. Keeping them informed in every forum that we can – how it affects them and what it means for them.”

Overall, the conference initiated productive discussions and offered an opportunity for medical leaders to share ideas in order to continue to take care of Soldiers and Family Members as the Army and USAREUR continue to evolve in the coming years.

“It’s about being agile, adaptable, versatile – all those terms send the message that we must be able to rapidly evolve and execute. Maintaining the skill set and the resiliency is crucial in order to respond in a turbulent environment,” West said.

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The U.S. Army Europe Commander, Lt. Gen. Mark P. Hertling (left), speaks with the Europe Regional Medical Command commander and USAREUR Command Surgeon, Brig. Gen. Nadja Y. West, during the ERMC Leaders Conference in Heidelberg, Germany November 1. (U.S. Army photo by Cpt. Charles Patterson)

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Brig. Gen. (retired) Richard L. Ursone, speaks to leaders from across Army Medicine during the Europe Regional Medical Command Leaders Conference in Heidelberg, Germany November 1. (U.S. Army photo by Cpt. Charles Patterson)

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From left: Brig. Gen. Nadja Y. West, Maj. Gen. David Rubenstein, Brig. Gen. (retired) Richard L. Ursone, Maj. Gen. (retired) Carla G. Hawley-Bowland, Brig. Gen. Keith W. Gallagher, Command Sgt. Maj. Frances Rivera, and Command Sgt. Maj. James E. Diggs, stand with fellow Army Medicine leaders during the Europe Regional Medical Command Leaders Conference in Heidelberg, Germany November 1. (U.S. Army photo by Cpt. Charles Patterson)