

TATRC On the Road at SOMSA 2017

Senior members from USAMRMC and TATRC were well represented at this year's Special Operations Medical Scientific Assembly (SOMSA) held 22-25 May, in Charlotte, NC. Among the MRMC attendees were seven members of the TATRC family. SOMSA is an annual meeting sponsored and run by the Special Operations Medical Association (SOMA). Founded in 1987, the SOMA brings together the unique blend of pre-hospital, tactical, wilderness, austere, disaster and deployed medicine with the primary goal of advancing the art and science of special operations medical care through the education and professional development of special operations medical providers. Through both SOMA's official publication, the Journal of Special Operations Medicine JSOM, and the annual SOMSA meeting, the SOMA provides a unique forum for military and civilian medical providers, academia and industry from around the world to meet and exchange ideas to advance the science, technology and skills of unconventional medicine.

Immediately preceded by two days of in-depth special operations medic training which included diverse topics like active shooter response, "tactical" ultrasound, K9 tactical emergency care, and battlefield acupuncture; this year's SOMSA included talks and posters on the latest trends in Special Operations Forces (SOF) medicine to include Prolonged Field Care, Tactical Combat Casualty Care, Global Engagement, and scientific advances directly impacting special operations medicine. Among the most noteworthy of this year's presentations were operational vignettes presented by special operations medics from recent real-world missions and key note talks by VADM(Ret) Richard Carmona, former Surgeon General of the United States, and COL James Czarnik, SOCAFRICOM Surgeon. Dr. Carmona focused on the need for even more specialized SOF medic training to meet the challenges of dispersed and remote global deployments in response to the ever increasing threat of terrorism and insurgencies. COL Czarnik built on that theme stressing that within remote indigenous settings, SOF medics, now, and conventional medical providers in the future, must be prepared and plan to work with what is locally available in terms of medical supplies, equipment, personnel, and practice. With such diverse and remote deployments, we can no longer expect to "fly in planeloads of stuff to set up shop as if we were at Walter Reed." Clearly such missions within austere environments are good candidates for innovative uses of virtual health technologies, of which TATRC is now playing a key role. Within several of the SOMSA break-out sessions, LTC Jeremy Pamplin led a group of SOF physicians and medics that presented their experienc-

es with virtual health systems, at both the deployed site of care, and at the CONUS consultant end of deployments to USCENTCOM and AFRICOM. Panel members stressed that the simplest and most flexible telemedicine call systems were the most reli-

able and effective. Many of the systems used were funded and supported through the AMEDD Advanced Medical Technology Initiative (AAMTI), which is administered and managed by TATRC. Another noteworthy presentation, which was the winner of the best research award, was made by SFC Paul Loos on innovative use of social media for SOF medic information exchange and education. Perhaps the best presentation was the last one given by former Navy SEAL CAPT (Ret), Frank Butler, MD who gave an update on Tactical Combat Casualty Care. Several talks had been presented on experiences in the use of fresh whole blood at sites of injury by SOF forces, especially the 75th Ranger Regiment. CAPT Butler stressed that while difficult to manage, whole blood is, by far, the most effective and immediate fluid replacement for combat casualties suffering from exsanguination. A direct outcome of this discussion is an effort to document a capability need to provide just-in-time delivery of whole blood to special operations forces, as well as recovery of unused blood after mission completions. This prompted SOCOM, USASOC, USAMMDA and TATRC to revive and extend previous studies of potential solutions such as smart parachutes and drones. TATRC's Operational Medicine Lab is pursuing courses of action with the other stakeholders.

Said Dr. Gary Gilbert, TATRC, a lifetime member of SOMA and current member of the Board of Directors, "Like every year, the culminating highlight of the event is the SOMA banquet at which both the SOF Medic of the Year presentations are made for each of the services, international SOF forces, and civilian EMS first responders; followed by reading of the names and deposit of symbolic dog tags for those SOF personnel who were killed in action during the past year." 



