

## Another Successful Symposium with the Special Operations Medical Association

The 2019 Special Operations Medical Association's (SOMA) Annual Symposium (SOMSA) was held 7 - 10 May in Charlotte, NC and key personnel from TATRC actively participated at this important yearly event. SOMA, a non-profit organization, focuses on the education and training of the Special Forces and Special Operations Combat Medics, who are often alone and unsupported in both tactical or non-tactical circumstances in remote, austere, and hostile environments. They are also responsible for the health care of their teams as well as surrounding indigenous populations which usually include noncombatant civilians. By providing this forum for military and civilian medical personnel from around the world to meet and exchange ideas, SOMA advances the science, technology, and skills of unconventional medicine which increases survivability, against the odds, for the people under their care.

This year's meeting featured two days of pre-conference tutorials and interactive demonstrations aimed directly at enhancing Special Operations Forces (SOF) medic operator skills. These tutorials were exceptionally well attended and were considered to be the highlight of the SOMSA event by these SOF medics. The regular conference included both daily plenary sessions with topics of general interest as well as breakout sessions organized as six tracks: Military Special Operations, Tactical Emergency Medicine, Human Performance & Resiliency, Medical Support Operations in Unconventional Warfare, SOF Medicine Relevant Research, and International Allied Nations Special Operations. As the SOMA Research Chair, TATRC's own Dr. Gary Gilbert moderated the day-long research track. The most notable keynote presentations included the annual "Tom Deal Memorial Lecture" by

Dr. Olen Netteburg entitled "Go to the End of the World... Then Turn Left and Go a Bit Farther." Dr. Netteburg is an emergency physician from Loma Linda Medical Center in California who spoke on his experiences treating indigenous peoples in the Bere Adventist Hospital located in a most remote area of Chad, Africa. Another outstanding plenary on "Meeting the Needs of Our Nation - Feasibility of Former SOF Medics Serving as Physician Extenders" by Arthur Kellerman, Dean of Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, was highly regarded. Additionally, a plenary session of Operational Vignettes by enlisted Special Operations Medics, Wounded SOF Non-Medical Operators, and civilian Tactical Emergency Medical Technicians brought the audiences to their feet.

Within the research track, Dr. Gilbert and the other research committee members selected two oral presentations and two scientific posters for awards. The winning oral research presentation plaque went to COL Stacy Schackelford, USAF MC, Director of the Joint Trauma Center for her talk entitled, "Military Prolonged Field Care and Survival in Iraq and Afghanistan." The best research poster award went to Maj (Ret) Christopher Dominguez, from the Mayo Clinic for his poster on the "Feasibility of Teaching Ocular Ultrasound in Simulated Traumatic Brain Injury for Military SOF Medics." For many, the real highlight of the symposium was the annual SOMSA Banquet at which the "SOF Medics of the Year" are recognized and attendees pay tribute to those SOF warriors who fell in the line duty during the year. Dr. Gilbert stated, "If for no other reason than this, to stand, bow, and pay my respects to those who willingly gave their lives, not just for their countries, but for all the free peoples of the world, I will continue to attend SOMSA, on my own as long as I can even after I retire." ■■■

