

# 59<sup>th</sup> MENTAL HEALTH SQUADRON

## MISSION

## LINEAGE

759<sup>th</sup> Medical Operations Squadron constituted, 5 Mar 1998

Activated, 1 Apr 1998

Redesignated 59<sup>th</sup> Life Skills Squadron, 31 May 2007

Redesignated 59<sup>th</sup> Mental Health Squadron, 14 Jan 2008

## STATIONS

Lackland AFB, TX, 1 Apr 1998

## ASSIGNMENTS

59<sup>th</sup> Medical Operations Group, 1 Apr 1998

## COMMANDERS

## HONORS

### Service Streamers

None

### Campaign Streamers

None

### Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

None

## Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

[1 Apr]-30 Jun 1998

1 Jul 1998-30 Jun 1999

1 Jan 2000-31 Dec 2001

1 Jan 2002-31 Dec 2003

1 Jan-31 Dec 2004  
1 Jan 2005-30 Jun 2006  
1 Jul 2006-30 Jun 2007  
1 Jul 2007-30 Jun 2008  
1 Jul 2008-30 Jun 2009

## **EMBLEM**

## **MOTTO**

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

The command structure of the 759th MDOS changed hands several times in 2005. Col Gregory Widern left to assume command of the 59th AMDG and Lt Col. Stephen Mazer stepped up to lead the squadron for over four months. Col Deborah Burgess was selected as the new squadron commander and took command on 10 November. The squadron superintendent position also changed hands. SMSgt Thomas Tucker retired from active duty on 1 July and SMSgt Beth Peura took over as superintendent 1 Oct after returning from Balad AB, Iraq.

This was a busy year, full of changes for our squadron. We continued to deploy over 10% of our AD forces this year without reduction in normal operations. Dramatic improvements in MEPRS accounting and coding resulted in valuable information shared with the flight commanders and squadron commander through the line briefings.

Internal Medicine: The flight bid farewell to Lt Col Piepenbrink as flight commander. Maj Kowalewski transferred from Keesler AFB after Hurricane Katrina to assume command. The flight remains the leader in the Air Force in educating world-class internists to support Air Staff requirements. Fifteen residents became board-certified staff internists, maintaining an over 95% pass-rate for the past eight years. The flight supported the tenancy of five other flights yet continued to service over 50,000 clinic visits per year. Three physicians responded to support Hurricane Katrina, and over half the staff deployed in support of OIF/OEF. The clinic supported an outpatient treatment and procedure clinic, diabetic outreach program and lipid treatment program. Despite significant manning shortages due to real-world operations, we were proud to demonstrate our nearly 100% accessibility rate as we transitioned to a fully-electronic medical record.

Dermatology Flight: Under the command of Lt Col Jay Viernes, this flight continued its reputation as a model clinic as the wing moved into 100% use of AHLTA. The flight's innovative processes garnered recognition up to the Air Staff level in assisting implementation throughout the AFMS.

Hematology-Oncology Flight: Led by Lt Col Stephanie Condron, this flight once again stood at the forefront of cancer care in the USAF. The Bone Marrow Transplant Unit received its first ever accreditation by the Foundation for the Accreditation of Cellular Therapy, only the second facility

to ever pass on the first attempt. Two to five members were deployed each AEF cycle to Balad AB, Iraq, in support of OIF, supporting both the AF Theater Hospital and the CASF. Three members deployed to New Orleans, LA in support of Hurricane Katrina relief operations.

Rheumatology Flight: Maj David True continued as the Flight Commander, while Col Arroyo retired following a distinguished career. During 2005, Maj Jeffrey Feinstein led the way with two publications in peer reviewed journals and Maj True had one. Dr. Jay Higgs continued providing rheumatology care in addition to assuming the position of Chairman of Internal Medicine.

Allergy and Immunology Flight: Under the command of Lt Col James Quinn, this flight continued their strong productivity supporting allergy care throughout the region by capturing all referred patients in all eligibility categories locally and seeing many referrals from across Texas and Oklahoma. The flight was fortunate to add Lt Col Michael Tankersley to the academic teaching staff in July. A cutting edge, new electronic medical record and tracking system for allergen immunotherapy was deployed, resulting in improved safety and documentation for over 300 patients on shots. One physician and two technicians returned from deployment in January while two additional technicians deployed during the summer AEF cycle. One technician deployed in support of Hurricane Katrina relief. In the aftermath of the hurricane, the Regional Allergy Consult Service took over the management of 13 bases that had been in Keesler Medical Center's region. The fellowship training program continued its tradition of excellence and expanded to nine fellows to become the largest in the DoD. The fellows and staff continued several ongoing research protocols and added several publications. The Immunizations Element continued their critical role in the readiness of our forces and health of our families by providing over 400,000 immunizations.

General Medicine Inpatient Unit: Maj Susan Jano was promoted to Lt Col, and was selected and matched as a squadron commander for 2006. The flight continued to undergo administrative changes when two new element leaders, two new element NCOICs, and a new flight NCOIC were selected. Lt Col Cheryl Howard assumed command of the flight in December. Staffing shortages continued to affect the flight, with a noticeable lack of experienced military nurses. Two baseline contracts for nurses were unable to fill all the authorized contract positions. 1x1 addition, staffing shortages among the enlisted corps was also a factor. Deployments continued throughout the year with an average of two to three nurses, and two technicians rotating each AEF cycle. Two personnel were sent to support Hurricane Katrina relief efforts and contingency preparations on the unit were made to accept an influx of patients. Lt Col Susan Jano was selected as the wing, and Air Force FGO of the year, Capt Luis Perez was selected as the 59th MDOG CGO of the year. The unit remained a 36-bed inpatient general medicine ward.

Gastroenterology Flight Under the command of Col Timothy Cassidy, this flight continued to push preventive health care services, increasing the number of colorectal cancer screening procedures by 20% and maintaining near-zero referrals downtown. During the past year we moved our entire operations to 2E, accomplishing this daunting task in a single week without compromising access to care. At the same time the flight took over outpatient clinical operations, amounting to over 300 patient visits each month, without increasing manning assigned to the flight.

Nephrology Flight: Maj Laveta McDowell was the flight commander for this unit during 2005. This flight launched a new outpatient anemia management clinic that now treats over 150 patients with anemia of chronic kidney disease, recapturing those that were previously self-injecting this medication. As a result, over 100 new outpatient encounters are created on a monthly basis, significantly increasing RVU production (mirroring our civilian counterparts), while improving compliance and safety. The flight deployed three technicians to Balad AB, Iraq in support of OIF in 2005, including our flight NCOIC, TSgt Misty Vamer, who also deployed in support of Hurricane Katrina relief in New Orleans LA. As a result of improvements in coding and capture of inpatient encounters, overall the clinic increased its workload 200% in 2005.

Endocrinology Flight: This flight launched the Insulin Pump Clinic, a monthly clinic lead by Lt Col Nina Watson, that incorporated nursing instruction and guest expert education with the traditional physician visit to provide a comprehensive approach to all insulin pump patients. The flight expanded its role as Air Force experts in the arena of nutritional medicine. Maj Damon Tanton was selected as the first nutrition specialist to serve at the Detention Hospital, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. While there, he created multiple diagnostic and treatment protocols, as well as standard forms designed to guide the medical care for those that followed. In addition, Maj Mark True became the first Air Force physician to obtain certification by the American Board of Physician Nutrition specialists as a nutrition specialist. The flight's support of OEF and OIF also included the deployment of Lt Col Marcus Cranston, who completed a 120-day tour serving as both, Chief, Clinic Services at Manas AB and Medical Director of a Ground CCATT at Ali Al Salem AB, Kuwait.

Infectious Disease Flight: The Infectious Diseases Flight directly supported OIF by deploying two physicians and one administrative technician. The physicians served in a variety of roles at the 332nd Air Force Theater Hospital, Balad AB, including Chief of Hospital Services and theater infectious diseases consultant. The flight partnered with the Defense Institute for Medical Operations, the U.S. Department of State, the US Agency for International Development, and the US Department of Health and Human Services to deliver a course on HIV/AIDS program and policy development. This course was given to the senior health officials of 25 developing nations, and addressed comprehensive, programmatic, as well as clinical issues. In addition, onsite courses were given in Mexico and the Russian Federation. The Flight continued its prolific clinical research on HIV/AIDS and its robust support of graduate and post-graduate medical education.

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Air Force Order of Battle  
Created: 5 Dec 2010  
Updated:

#### Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.