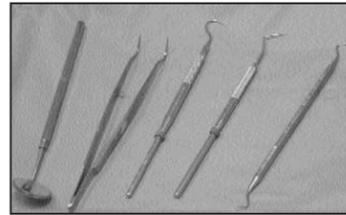




Dental

maximizes quality service to fleet



Dental: Provides free, outstanding dental care to Sailors

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visit, saving the patient and the command time. Instead of providing a separate appointment for each service, we have created an opportunity to get a whole lot done for the Sailor on a single visit.

One way Naval Dental Center "maximizes" its resources is by putting the right people in the right job...and the reception desk is a prime example.

"Often times, organizations will put someone at the front desk because they want to keep them out of the way," said Hutto. "When some one walks through our doors, they are meeting some of our best people right up front."

According to Hutto, the reception personnel do far more than make appointments. In fact, they continuously rove throughout the facility and look for open chairs, matching up Sailors with services, piggybacking appointments as much as possible.

"We have three priorities here: keep our chairs full, delight our customers, and have fun," Hutto said.

"The Navy standard is one chair, one dentist, one technician, one hour. The quality of the care has always been good, but by using this standard, we are under utilized," said Lt. Cmdr. Patrick Munley, Dental fleet liaison officer. "We have expanded the Navy standard."

Munley said that instead of one appointment, one service, Sailors get "one-stop shopping" treatment opportunities, meaning, an exam plus cleaning, or a filling plus cleaning.

"We take advantage of their time and get as much done as possible while we have that Sailor in a chair," he added.

"One-stop shopping" is not the only innovation applied at the Naval Dental Center. NDCPH has implemented an "expanded function" multi-chair delivery system. Instead of the old standard of one dentist, one technician, the Dental Center employs one dental officer and three technicians, where multiple patients are treated at the same time.

"By using expanded function, multiple chair delivery systems, and increased technician to doctor ratios, we have increased our efficiency, allowing us to provide more quality service in less time to Sailors," Munley said.

Other innovations include a web-based electronic liaison program, allowing NDCPH to provide better and faster communications with its customers. Incentives are also in place for independent duty corpsmen on ships and submarines to work with NDCPH in order to meet the required ODR requirements.

Maximizing the use of mobile dental vans and embarking dental teams onboard ships have allowed the Dental Center to reach out and touch their fleet customers. "Dentistry at the deckplate saves commands 2.1 manhours for each appointment," said Munley.

Back in the center, use of Red Cross volunteers and fully utilizing dental technicians have made expanded function multi chair delivery systems a reality, maximizing efficiency.

"Traditionally, technicians have been under utilized, sitting at the side of a chair providing suction and little more," said Dental Technician 3rd Class Stacy Mitchell, a 26 year old native of Beaufort, S.C. who serves as the fleet liaison between ships and submarine independent duty corpsman. "Here we are utilized to our fullest potential."

"With expanded function, we are not only learning more about dentistry, we are allowed to practice it, helping to put in fillings or making impressions, and we are doing more every day," she added.

According to Lt. Cmdr. Munley, the installation of digital radiography (x-ray) equipment has increased the oral exam turn-around time. Using digital images vice traditional x-rays have decreased patient waiting by seven minutes each examination, allowing providers to see more patients per hour than in prior years.

"This has decreased our backlog of patients requiring annual dental examinations and allows us to open more chairs for 'one-stop shopping' opportunities," he added.

"We have spent four years building our operation to where it is today," said Cmdr. John Lundgren, the Department Head of Endodontics at NDCPH. "Quality care is better than it ever was. We provide a huge savings to the fleet in man-hours because we are able to take care of more Sailors, better, at one time. Our results speak for themselves."

And they do. Operational dental readiness (ODR) at Pearl Harbor was raised from 84 percent to 94 percent in 16 months. Dental Health (Class 1 Patients) went from 19 percent to over 49 percent, the highest in the Navy. To date, Naval Dental Center has deployed 50 consecutive ships and submarines at 100 percent ODR and that has never been done before...anywhere.

"Our numbers are among the highest in the Navy," said Capt. Hutto, who added that the numbers are significant because it allows Dental to operate in the preventive mode. "It costs less money to maintain dental health. The higher the number of Sailors whose dental health is excellent equates to added savings, allowing us to add more to the Sailor's dental benefit."

In fact, the value of services rendered over the cost of doing business is some \$2 million more than the preceding 16 months, allowing NDCPH to provide more cosmetic services, such as minor teeth straightening and bleaching.

"No other command maximizes the time for Sailors to get their dental work out of the way," said Petty Officer Kelly. "We make it easier for the Sailor to get their work done, less work for us, and less hassle for them."

Dental Technician 1st Class (SW) Barry Heffner agrees. "We teach Sailors to take advantage of their dental benefit while they are in the Navy," he said.

Heffner, a 32-year-old native of Pottsville, Pa., serves as the shore command dental liaison and has been in the Navy over 13 years. Although he has only been at NDCPH five months, he says he has been able to contribute to the command's efficiency in a big way.

"Beginning earlier this year, we have been collecting all the ship's dental records," he said, adding that this is not a typical policy in the fleet. "We have most of the records now, with the exception of those ships on deployment. We keep the ships informed, sending out a monthly report on dental readiness, updating that report every week. It is easier to track the dental health of our Sailors this way."

"We are here for the fleet," said Petty Officer Mitchell. "We all work together and we are proud to give the fleet the best possible care."

As the fleet liaison for ships and subs, any command that needs anything goes to Mitchell. Like her shore counterpart, she sets up appointments and deals with emergency issues. She tracks each ship's status and even ships passing through Pearl Harbor get a call from her.

"We maintain high quality and I think (fleet units) are very happy with what we are doing for them," she said.

"These guys are awesome!" says Hospital Corpsman Chief Dennis W. Davis, USS Greenville (SSN 772) independent duty corpsman. "While we were in Norfolk, we were at 69 percent dental readiness and getting dental work done for the crew was a challenge. But this is Pearl Harbor, where the minimal standard is 100 percent readiness. I've never seen a better dental facility."



ET2(SW) Daniel Conner, USS Fletcher (DD 992) is getting a new filling by Lt. Cmdr. Patrick Munley, Dental fleet liaison officer. By using expanded function, multiple-chair delivery systems and increased technician to doctor ratios, Naval Dental Center Pearl Harbor has increased efficiency, allowing more quality service to be provided in less time to Sailors.



(Above) DT3 Tina Sotello and Richena Payan polish a Sailor's tooth at the Naval Dental Center, Pearl Harbor.



(Right) HMC Dennis W. Davis, USS Greenville (SSN 772) independent duty corpsman talks with DT3 Stacy Mitchell, fleet liaison between ships and submarine independent duty corpsman about dental readiness.

Photos by
JOCS(SW) Phil Eggman

Columbus: Sailors leave with teeth in order

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less, feel confident their oral health will not jeopardize their mission while underway because Naval Dental Center Pearl Harbor (NDCPH) has certified her as 100 percent operationally dental ready (ODR). In fact, Columbus is the 50th consecutive submarine or surface ship from Pearl Harbor to deploy at 100 percent ODR, and no one has ever done that before — ever.

Until now. "It is crucial that ships and submarines deploy with the best possible dental health to decrease the chance of any dental emergency underway because most ships and all submarines do not have dental facilities onboard," said Lt. Cmdr. Patrick Munley, fleet dental liaison officer for NDCPH.

According to Munley, den-

tal readiness is measured in four levels of dental health, Class 1 through 4. To deploy at 100 percent ODR, each member of the crew must be either Class 1 (good dental health) or Class 2 (no dental problems foreseeable during deployment).

Class 4 means health is unknown, requiring an exam to make that determination, while Class-3 means a dental problem needs immediate attention, something a submarine or a ship without dental facilities can not attend to while deployed.

"I can do some emergency work if necessary, but I have limited resources and facilities onboard," said Hospital Corpsman 1st Class (SS/SW) Robert Stewart, USS Columbus' independent duty corpsman (IDC). "This is why it means a great deal to me that our crew is 100 percent dental ready."

"We have taken dentistry to the deckplates, while in-

still incentives for our independent duty corpsmen to meet ODR requirements," Munley said, noting an aggressive program of combining a plethora of services to Sailors.

"We maximize the use of our mobile dental vans to reach our fleet and shore customers and embark dental teams aboard ships on pre-deployment exercises," he said. "We also provide 'one stop' treatment opportunities for our Sailors (exam plus cleaning, or filling plus cleaning) and educate them on the value of the services they receive."

Stewart is proud of the fact that Columbus is the 50th ship to deploy at 100 percent ODR and praises the Naval Dental Center personnel for their exceptional help. However, he gave special praise to Dental Technician 3rd Class Stacy Mitchell, NDCPH fleet liaison who helped him get his

crew ready to deploy.

"She's been fantastic," he said. "She keeps us up to date on our needs, sets up our appointments, and more. She's been a big part of this."

Machinist Mate 1st Class (SS) Sam Filson, an Indianapolis, Ind. native assigned to USS Columbus, said he is "very" satisfied with the job the dental clinic and Petty Officer Stewart have done getting the crew ready to go.

"A dental emergency for me underway would be like a life threatening medical emergency," he said. "The suffering would probably be similar."

As a customer, Filson praises the use of the pier-side dental van, which he says saves everyone a lot of time and trouble. "It's great to be able to walk out on the pier every three or four months and get our work done right there," he added.