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Base health care, clinic to get thorough look

By Lt. Col Ed Memi
437 AW Public Affairs

Two teams will give the base clinic a thorough inspection Wednesday through Dec. 8 to examine the quality and access of health care for all beneficiaries.

The two inspections, called the Health Services Inspection and the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, occur simultaneously once every three years.

Two civilian JCAHO inspectors, based out of Chicago, Ill., will survey the clinic and its various programs to determine if accepted civilian health-care practices are being properly followed and then will award accreditation based on those findings. The process is similar to the accreditation that occurs for local colleges.

The JCAHO's accreditation process seeks to help organizations identify "best practices," or processes that are outstanding and deserve to be shared with other health-care organizations, and problem areas that need to be corrected to improve the

quality of care and services provided. In addition to evaluating compliance with standards and intent statements, significant time is spent in consultation and education.

"We've always done well in past inspections and received accreditation with commendation, which goes to only the top health-care providers," said Capt. Shelley Lovelady, group practice manager in the 437th Medical Group and the overall project officer for the inspections.

The JCAHO, the nation's leading quality of care evaluator in health-care organizations, evaluates and accredits nearly 19,000 organizations and programs in the United States, and more than 8,000 other health-care organizations that provide long-term care, behavioral health care, laboratory and ambulatory services.

The Health Services Inspector's mission is to provide senior Air Force leadership with objective, independent assessments of critical programs and processes to enable them to make good policy decisions based upon accurate information. "They are the eyes and ears of senior lead-

ership, and their independent and universal approach enables them to provide more objective data than other Air Force organizations," according to a mission statement by the team of eight inspectors from the Air Force Inspection Agency, Kirtland AFB, N.M., who will conduct the inspection.

"The HSI looks at the military aspects of health care and covers those areas that the JCAHO does not look at. It is usually a very thorough inspection," said Lovelady. The HSI focuses on cost, quality and access to care, added Lovelady.

"The two inspection teams work together to avoid duplicating areas, and it is our chance to shine," Lovelady said. "In the future, we will only get 30 days notice in anticipation of these inspections."

"We want to get a good showing at the Health Care Consumers Advisory meeting, which is open to anyone who uses our services," said Lovelady. "Their goal is to receive direct beneficiary feedback about the quality of care and any perceptions of their health-care experience."

The meeting is planned for Dec. 6, 2:30-3:30 p.m., in the Charleston Club and is conducted as part of the HSI.

"We're ready for this inspection and actually are looking forward to it," commented Col. Regina Aune, 437th Medical Group commander. "An inspection of this nature requires an intensive amount of planning and preparation on the part of everyone on the staff from the newest airmen, the civilian managers, to the most senior officers.

"Our own self-assessment has required a great deal of hard work and serious reflection on how we provide health care," she added. "The process has highlighted for us areas where we perform in an outstanding manner and areas where we can improve.

"The energy and enthusiasm put forth in getting ready for this inspection leaves me with no doubt that the inspectors will see that the staff is an effective, spirited and professional team that is passionate in providing quality health care," said Aune. "I am confident that we will do quite well on the inspections."

CAFB heads to Air Force Top Dollar competition

A team of 437th Airlift Wing comptrollers and contractors will compete in Top Dollar 2000, one of the Air Force's top field competitions, Dec. 8-11 at the Combat Readiness Training Center, Gulfport, Miss.

"I feel pretty confident we'll be able to win it," said 2nd Lt. Andy Grab, team leader. "Everyone on our team is really strong in all the key areas, not just their primary area of expertise."

Top Dollar, which began in 1992 and is held every two years, is a physically and mentally demanding training exercise and competition that puts Air Force comptroller and contracting specialists in a bare-base environment in a "foreign country." It requires them to deploy with all the necessary equipment to maintain essential opera-

tions and to complete scenarios typically found during real-world contingencies.

This year's competition features 13 teams from Air Force bases around the world. The teams earned the trip to Gulfport by winning their respective major command and Air National Guard competitions. Each team has seven members: five finance experts and two contingency contracting officers.

Staff Sgt. Jacqueline Dent, one of two contingency contracting officers on the team, said the Top Dollar experience has been important for her. "I've never deployed, and I was always dreading it, not knowing what to expect or if I would be able to do my job in a deployed environment," she said, explaining



Photo by Senior Airman Jason Smith

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Members of the Top Dollar Team practice first aid to prepare for the competition Dec. 8-11.