

## NATO Medical Conference focusses on the Human Approach - ACT

Written by U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Chris Carrothers  
Wednesday, 05 October 2011 10:55

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The 2011 NATO Operations Medical Conference (NOMC) opened at the National Intrepid Centre of Excellence (NICoE), a treatment planning and research facility located in Bethesda, Maryland October 4.

The conference, hosted by Allied Command Transformation (ACT), brings together medical professionals from throughout NATO and member nations.

Commander Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Rear Admiral Alton L. Stocks, opened the conference. "I can't think of a more fitting venue for your conference today," said Stocks. "Your ambitious schedule, remarks and discussions over the next three days promise to evoke the very comprehensive and collaborative spirit with which this unique space was conceived to resonate."

The conference was kicked off by Colonel Zoltan M. Vekerdi of Allied Command Transformation who said, "NATO needs the comprehensive approach in crisis management."

Highlighting the theme of the conference, "Human Aspects and the Comprehensive Approach," he went on to say "We can get agreement with our partners if we start with medical issues, that's a door opening opportunity for NATO, therefore Medical can provide a start point for interaction."

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The discussions that followed focused on medical operational training and better coordination with partner nations and military organisations.

US Navy Medical Corps and Joint Staff Surgeon, Rear Admiral David J. Smith, spoke on ISAF's issues in Afghanistan.

One problem he discussed is the availability of healthy drinking water. "It's not just water, but sanitation and health, that's the big medical component that keeps getting forgotten by various groups that drill wells, but then, we don't know how to keep the water clean once it's available," said Smith.

Smith went on to talk about the training initiatives currently underway to train Afghan civilian and military personnel through a one-year nursing and an 18-month physician's assistant programmes.



The programme has been a big success and many graduates are scoring higher on qualification tests than the national average he said. Increasing the quality and availability of medical care within Afghanistan is also a priority.

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The conference will cover areas of Improving Physical Health, Solders' Rehabilitation after Traumatic Brain Injury and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The conference concludes October 6 with a tour of the National Intrepid Centre of Excellence facilities, highlighting the most current medical treatment and procedures within U.S. armed forces medicine.