

# TeamSTEPPS takes wings at Fort Carson

By Jeff Troth MEDDAC PAO

Evans Army Community Hospital staff met with pilots of the 4<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade to observe a different perspective on team coordination Dec. 1.



The hospital's staff members who participated in the training received a class on aircrew coordination, a TeamSTEPPS refresher class and then went to Butts Army Airfield to witness firsthand the coordination needed for a helicopter crew to fly safely.

"The reason for partnering with the aircrew is to show our hospital staff how everyone on an aircrew is an integral part of the team and everyone's voice is equal, since they all have a vested interest in the outcome of the mission," said Capt. Brent Hayward, EACH Baylor Resident. "Being a pilot and a medical services officer myself, I noticed similarities between air crew coordination and the coordination that is needed amongst our health care teams."

Hayward saw the training conducted by the aircrews from 2<sup>nd</sup> General Aviation Support Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> CAB, as a way to help reinforce a healthcare teamwork system. The Team Strategies & Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety (TeamSTEPPS) is a method designed to improve the quality, safety, and efficiency of health care. All Evans' employees receive TeamSTEPPS training when they begin working at the hospital.

"TeamSTEPPS is a great tool, but we don't take it out of the toolbox enough," said Hayward.

At Evans hospital TeamSTEPPS training is a requirement during inprocessing and every three years. While aircrews receive crew coordination training semiannually and use those communication skills every time they fly.

In order to see how the pilots and enlisted crew members communicate during a mission, a flight in a Blackhawk helicopter was scheduled as part of the training, but the flight was grounded due to weather; even though the flight didn't happen, Hayward said the training was a success.

"We were still able to take our staff out of their normal environment and let them see a team communication process that is similar to what happens in our clinics," he said. "But, in our clinics we

need to change the perceived hierarchy among docs and nurses and PAs (physician assistants) and medics.”

He said that sometimes a nurse or medic may not feel empowered to correct a doctor. But TeamSTEPPS is designed to help employees engage people who are senior to them either by rank or by position.

“TeamSTEPPS is a comprehensive teamwork training system designed to improve quality and safety in health care,” said Sheri Ferguson, the chief of Evans’ Quality Service Division and a TeamSTEPPS master trainer. “The system is rooted in more than three decades of research in high-stress, high-risk industries, such as military aviation. Aviation and healthcare are both industries that are high-risk environments where the consequences of error may lead to serious consequences or death.”

TeamSTEPPS is based on a framework of four skills: communication, leadership, situation monitoring, and mutual support. The system provides specific tools and strategies to support these core skills.

“Communication and information sharing is one of the most important aspects of successful medical teams and quality clinical care,” Ferguson said. “No single clinical specialty or discipline can meet all of a patient's needs, so we have to talk to one another to coordinate care plans.”

Data compiled by the Joint Commission – a primary hospital accreditation agency -- shows that between 1995 and 2005 ineffective communication was identified as the root cause of 66 percent of reported errors in medical facilities nationwide. Data from 2010 to 2013 show that ineffective communication remains as one of the top three root causes of errors in civilian and military hospitals.

“TeamSTEPPS is a great tool for reducing errors, because it gets everyone talking to each other,” said Hayward. “The purpose of this training is to remind people that everyone on a healthcare team is responsible for providing quality care to our patients, and to remove barriers that hinder that.”



EACH leadership listen to an aircrew mission pre-brief at Butts Army Airfield from Blackhawk Pilots assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> General Aviation support Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Brigade as part of TeamSTEPPS training Dec. 1.