



News Release

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U.S., NATO partners meet to discuss mental health, mTBI issues

SEMBACH KASERNE, Germany – Military medical and behavioral health specialists from 10 NATO countries met in Germany February 24 and 25 for a Mental Health and mild Traumatic Brain Injury workshop.

The workshop, which took place at Vogelweh and Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, saw experts from several NATO countries speak on topics ranging from pre-deployment mental health screening procedures used by the Romanian military to managing TBI for U.S. service members and their families.

The event allowed allied nations to share information and ideas about what different military medical systems are doing in the mental health and mTBI arenas, said Lt. Col. Graeme Bicknell, Behavioral Health Division director for Europe Regional Medical Command.

“This is an opportunity for us to put our best foot forward,” Bicknell said. “It’s an opportunity for us to talk about the best practices among our allies. It helps us better understand each other and know what we bring to the fight. It also helps us to understand the cultural differences (as they apply to mental health and TBI issues).”

Workshop attendees came from the U.S., Germany, Hungary, Great Britain, Belgium, Romania, France, Czech Republic, Estonia and Lithuania. The idea for the workshop came from discussions between ERMC commanding General Brig. Gen. Van Coots and his counterparts in the German Army medical corps.

“We asked what our allies would like to talk about and most said mental health and TBI,” Bicknell said. “We arranged for some of the best qualified speakers from the United States and invited our NATO allies as well.”

The U.S. military medical system has advanced considerably in their understanding and treatment of these issues based on experiences gained through almost 14 years of war, Bicknell said, but sharing knowledge gained by other countries is helpful as well. Most of those attending the workshop agreed.

“It was a great way to learn about current and innovative research being conducted by NATO forces and the U.S. Department of Defense,” said Capt. Rachel Wiley, a counseling psychologist at LRMC who noted that participants were also provided with clinical recommendations they can use in their practice.

“Mental health and mTBI are serious topics for servicemembers, and we need to know more and be able to treat them better, earlier and with better results,” said Dr. Stefan Kropp, an attendee representing the German Army Reserves. Kropp said he viewed the workshop as an “ongoing discussion” for the way ahead in how the military treats mental health and mTBI.



Caption:

Brig. Gen. Van Coots, Commander U.S. Army Europe Regional Medical Command (lower left) poses a question to Hungarian Defense Forces representatives after their presentation on “Experiences of the Williams Life Skills Training Program in the Hungarian Defense Forces.” The Feb. 25 presentation by (left to right standing) Maj. Beatrix Hornyak, Lt. Col. Andrea Soter and Capt. Balazs Tapai was made during a Mental Health and mild Traumatic Brain Injury Workshop where military medical and behavioral health specialists gathered from 10 NATO countries. (U.S. Army Photo/Phil A. Jones)