

MINUTES, 11-18-09 FINAL  
Meeting via Teleconference

## CALL TO ORDER

CDR Tejashri Purohit-Sheth called the meeting to order at 1300

## **ATTENDEES (MEMBERS) & EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS**

See attached Attendance Roster

## **PARTICIPANTS**

See attached Attendance Roster.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the September 16, 2009 meeting were approved with request to email any corrections or edits to CAPT Stinson.

## **CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER REPORT (CAPT CLARE HELMINIAK)**

- CAPT Helminiak presented information on the ongoing Transformation, stating that we need to be aggressive for the future of the Corps and that we should look to the DOD for a dynamic, strategic plan with authorizing language and budget plans. Essentially, we need medical officer planning and long term planning to be in line with so that budget, legislative requirements, and agency needs are met and support our career at the same time supporting agency missions. Agency leadership must be on board with the Corps and its missions. CAPT Helminiak has spoken with and will continue to speak with senior leadership (Dr. Koh and Dr. Benjamin) about forward motion of the Corps. Corps expansion has been limited in the past because our system cannot recruit quickly or broadly since our structure and budget don't allow it. Quarterly readiness is a component of Transformation that CAPT Helminiak continues to work on.
- CAPT Helminiak is undertaking recruitment activities and plans town hall meetings at each agency. She plans to work with CAPT Coppola (OCCO) to do this and wants officers to undertake this effort also.
- CAPT Helminiak developed a slide presentation to stress the importance of recruitment. Currently, there are only 946 medical officers, with the Indian Health Service continuing to "hemorrhage" medical officers. Because there are relatively few medical officers and the process of securing positions takes long, new opportunities often go by the wayside. She presented additional statistics about medical officer numbers and agency staffing as follows: 103 officers in the CDC are in the retirement age, this number is 73 for the IHS

(over 50%), and 75% of medical officers at the NIH are eligible for retirement. There are a significant number of officers who have greater than 25 years of PHS time, especially in CDC and the NIH.

- CAPT Helminiak also spoke about promotions and ongoing changes in the Corps. When promotion boards meet, they need to understand agencies. Mentors may be helpful for officers to understand the promotion process. At the time an officer is eligible for promotion, all OFRD activities and an officer's eOPF must be up to date. The eOPF should be clear and in an easily readable format and should be complete. Regarding the ongoing changes in the Corps, CAPT Helminiak noted several issues: 1) in order to make the PHS in line with DOD the temporary grade status should be discontinued; 2) Corps expansion needs to occur and may happen through the work of senior leadership with the ASH and the SG; 3) the Corps is in a draft status for issues such as BMI that would align the Corps more with the DOD; and 4) there are assorted issues that need to be addressed such as the value of DOD awards versus PHS awards and the problems with 05 and 06 officers undergoing deployments.

## **DIRECT ACCESS OVERVIEW (CDR RICHARD GLABACH)**

- CDR Glabach is a Transformation Officer-Information Systems Policy Analyst who has 10 years experience working with the Direct Access system
- This is a self-service system to be used by Commissioned Officers for information such as ACLS and BLS certifications (under heading of Job Preferences).
- There is a User's Guide to the system that can be accessed at the time the officer opens the system.
- CDR Glabach is available to assist officers as needed and provided the following contact information:  
CDR Richard Glabach  
Transformation Officer - Information Systems Policy Analyst  
Rockville, MD 20852  
240-453-6094  
fax 240-453-6109  
[richard.glabach@hhs.gov](mailto:richard.glabach@hhs.gov)

## **UPDATE ON PHYSICIANS PILOT PROGRAM (LT SCOTT HENDERSON [OS])**

- This program was initiated 7-2008 as a 2 year pilot program.
- The program was designed as an additional way to recruit civilian physicians and as an additional way to recruit physicians wishing to leave other uniformed services.
- The program allows some physicians to join PHS at higher ranks than the ranks for which they would have otherwise been eligible.

- The program allows some physicians who would not have previously been eligible to join PHS to join.
- Under this program, civilians without any prior uniformed service experience may enter PHS active duty (over age 44, unlimited tour of duty if age 44-51, 3 year limited tour of duty if >51 years of age) and receive senior ranks.
- Under this program, physicians from other Uniformed Services may transfer into PHS with up to 15 years of prior service and must commit to 10 additional years of service.
- The program is limited to 35 entrants per year.
- There is a T & E cap waiver that allows civilians to enter at the O-5 rank.
- To date, there have been 4 interservice transfers and 8 senior physicians commissioned for active duty.

**OPPOSITION COMMENTS:**

- **Many current PHS medical officers oppose this “Pilot Program” because it increases the already great competition among PHS medical officers for limited numbers of promotions to senior ranks (O-5 and O-6) available for PHS officers who have served PHS with dedication over many years. It does so by giving away O-5 spots to civilian physicians without such experience. Use of rank without commensurate service as a recruitment enticement in this way, at the expense of those currently serving, may also lessen the meaning and respect for the ranks themselves and for PHS as a uniformed service.**
- **Many current PHS medical officers also oppose this “Pilot Program” because it increases already great competition for a limited numbers of permanent grade promotions to senior ranks and limited numbers of spots in the regular corps among PHS officers who have served in PHS over many years by giving away such spots to civilians and to members of sister uniformed services who are leaving their services.**
- **Some current PHS officers find it inequitable that, under the “Pilot Program,” senior officers may be immediately accorded status as assimilated (Regular Corps) PHS officers when leaving their services and joining PHS. Unlike in other services, PHS medical officers typically have to compete first for temporary grade promotions and then later for permanent grade promotions to match the promotions they have already received, and have to serve first in the Reserve Corps before earning a spot in the PHS Regular Corps.**
- **It appears that for each officer who leaves another service to join PHS in this “Pilot Program,” approximately one qualified current PHS officer will be denied a permanent grade promotion in the Regular Corps. So, the program seems to take away permanent grade promotions and regular corps spots that would have gone to a current PHS officers and give them instead to officers leaving other services who have not yet proven their skills in PHS in the way PHS officers are required to.**
- **One PPAC member also asked whether PHS is scrutinizing “Pilot Program” applicants carefully enough before bringing them into PHS.**

## SG-PAC MEETING UPDATE & PAC CHAIR REPORT (CDR TEJASHRI PUROHIT-SHETH)

- COER is due to the Office of Commissioned Corps Operations (OCCO) by 18 November 2009.
- We just found out that there are certain things that must be entered into Direct Access; not the OFRD website, at this time: 1. Supervisory updates (under Supervisory Information); 2. APFT results (Under Physical Fitness); 3. ACLS or BLS updates (Under My Job Preferences); 4. Deployment roles (Under My Job Preferences)
- It is extremely important that officers preparing their records for review by the PY10 Promotion Boards be alert to where they should be sending documentation. Officers should review the Promotion Information web page ([http://dcp.psc.gov/promotions\\_table\\_of\\_contents.aspx](http://dcp.psc.gov/promotions_table_of_contents.aspx)) and the OFRD web page (<http://ccrf.hhs.gov/ccrf/>) for the proper disposition of required documentation. A brief listing of common errors follows.
- ALL medical information and Annual Physical Fitness Test (APFT) results go to the Medical Affairs Branch (**some MUST be mailed** – see web sites cited above).
- Licensure/Certifications must be fax'ed to the Licensure Coordinator (NOT THE e-OPF). See web sites cited above for proper fax numbers.
- CV's and Basic Life Support (BLS) certifications should be fax'ed to the officer's e-OPF. See web sites cited above for proper fax numbers,
- DO NOT fax CV Cover Sheets separately from the CV itself. The last CV submitted will overwrite the previous submission. If you submit a CV and then submit a CV cover sheet, only the cover sheet will appear in the e-OPF (or vice versa)
- DO NOT copy more than one document onto a single sheet for inclusion in your e-OPF. File each document separately.
- There is no provision for letters of recommendation for promotion. Please DO NOT fax these to the e-OPF. Thank You Letters and Letters of Appreciation for work done outside your position are appropriate and provided for in the e-OPF.
- These and other requirements and instructions are included in the web pages cited above. Note that faxing to the e-OPF is a paperless process. Documents are moved directly from the electronic fax into the electronic OPF. Therefore, documents faxed to the incorrect fax number may be lost, placing an officer at a disadvantage.
- Be cautious. When in doubt, carefully follow the instructions provided by the web sites cited above and by the instructions provided by the form/s being submitted.
- As you are probably aware, the Commissioned Corps billets system is in the process of transformation. In January 2010, an electronic process will be launched whereby all officers will be requested to initiate the creation of new billets for the positions they currently encumber. The launch schedule is as follows:

January 2010 – Nurse and Therapist categories (category-specific billets only)

February 2010 – Engineer, EHO, and Pharmacist categories (category-specific billets only)

March 2010 – Dental, Dietitian, Scientist, and HSO categories (category-specific billets only)

April 2010 – Medical and Veterinarian categories (category-specific billets only)

May 2010 – Multidisciplinary billets

The steps of the process are described in the attached Word document entitled “Billets Transformation Development Process”.

Two versions of tutorials (video and text) have been created to guide supervisors and reviewing officials through the billets creation and review process. These tutorials provide substantial detail regarding the process steps identified above. The video versions of these tutorials require approximately 22 minutes (supervisor version) or 25 minutes (reviewing official version) to complete. The text versions are just over 10 and 13 pages each, respectively.

If you are a Commissioned Corps Officer who acts as a supervisor or reviewing official for another Commissioned Corps Officer, you are strongly encouraged to complete the supervisor or reviewing official tutorial located here:

[http://dcp.psc.gov/Billets\\_Tutorial.aspx](http://dcp.psc.gov/Billets_Tutorial.aspx)

Efforts will be made to circulate this notice to civilian supervisors and reviewing officials of Commissioned Corps Officers. In an effort to effectively expand this outreach effort, all officers are also encouraged to forward this notice to their civilian supervisors and reviewing officials, as applicable.

Additionally, there is a billets transformation Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page located here:

<http://www.usphs.gov/transformation/billet.aspx>

If you do not have access to Microsoft Office (Excel) you should complete the video version of the tutorial. The text version requires you to be able to open an Excel spreadsheet within Excel.

If you have any questions regarding the tutorial or the upcoming billets transformation process, please contact:

CAPT Byron P. Bailey, MPH  
Transformation Officer - Billets  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Office of Public Health and Science  
1101 Wootton Parkway, Suite 100, Room 117  
Rockville, MD 20852  
(240) 453-6101 (voice)

## **COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUP UPDATES**

### ***AMSUS (CDR Linda Ulrich & CDR Gerald Taylor)***

- CDR Purohit-Sheth reported that the annual meeting is ongoing this week.

### ***Awards (CDR Paul Jung)***

- Awards were submitted for the following officers: CDR Lori Newman (former PPAC Chair) and CAPT Judy Bader (PPAC website development and maintenance)
- Special assignment awards for outgoing PPAC members will be submitted soon.

### ***Billets, Officer Profiles and Selection Systems (CDR Rochelle Nolte)***

- No report at this meeting.

### ***Career Development and Training (CAPT Barbara Stinson and LCDR Milton Irizarry)***

- CDR George Ceremuga and CDR Daisy Eng volunteered to provide phone contact with new medical officers undergoing OBC training.
- The following committee meeting minutes were received. Minutes are also posted on the PPAC Portal.

Minutes for the Friday, November 13, 2009 Career Development and Training  
Sub-committee Meeting

Members in Attendance:  
CAPT Barbara Stinson, Co-chair  
LCDR Milton Irizarry, Co-chair  
CDR George Ceremuga  
CDR Daisy Eng  
LCDR Ezra Barzilay  
LCDR Ha Tang

The meeting was called to order at 0930.

### **Issue 1: Mentoring of New Officers**

**Discussion:** The meeting was opened with a renewed call for volunteers to mentor new officers and for the committee as a whole to take on a more active role. One officer suggested we mesh the different agency liaisons, the Associate Recruiter Program and the CD/T sub-committee into one umbrella group. The same officer added that the ARP remains dormant pending funding and needs to become fully operational before this merge can be contemplated. This issue remains pending for further discussion.

A member officer suggested creating a rotation list similar to OFRD's deployment roster. Officers would rotate for one month throughout the year and be responsible for contacting new arrivals to match them with mentors or serve as such themselves. Another officer's suggestion was that one or two members be assigned to contact those on the mentors list and assign them to new accessions based on shared characteristics such as being in the same agency or geographic location. This last suggestion garnered the most support from those present. Ideally, the new officers will receive the Welcome Package along with the name and contact information of their assigned mentor shortly after commissioning. For this to take place smoothly, we need to bring OCCO on board. CAPT Stinson, CD/T Co-chair volunteered to contact that division's CAPT Katy Palatianos to ask for her help. LCDR Irizarry has volunteered to be OBC's contact. The duties of that task remain to be defined. Another sub-committee member noted that most mentor officers on the list are not active participants in CD/T's efforts and should become so if they want to keep such designation. The attendees agreed with this suggestion.

**Resolution:** The issues above are still open for consideration as the logistics involved remain to be worked out.

### **Issue 2: CD/T Representation at OBC**

**Discussion:** There is still a need for CD/T representation at the OBC graduation ceremony held in Landstown, VA. Initially our CPO, CAPT Helminiak, attended the ceremony but she is not always able to do so. It was proposed that the sub-committee contact CDR Alicia Vantran, an active PPAC participant, and ask her for her availability to attend as it is believed she lives near the location where the graduation is held. The need for a CD/T representative at the Tuesday night teleconference talk has been filled by CDR Daisy Eng's volunteering to take on the responsibility. The teleconference is held the first week of OBC and CDR Eng's task is to read a welcome passage to the class.

Additionally, it was decided that a copy of the Welcome Package and the Mentors List will be sent to all members of the sub-committee in anticipation of their becoming more active participants in CD/T efforts. **Resolution:** As above

### **3. New Issues**

**Discussion:** Two officers expressed their frustration at having OCCO loose or misplace their accession documents a number of times. The officers were interested in finding a mechanism for redressing these shortcomings so that delays can be prevented in the future. **Resolution:** Their concerns will be raised at the next CD/T meeting.

The sub-committee welcomed two new members, LCDR's Barzilay and Tang, who joined us for the meeting.

Finally, a call for the best time to meet was made by CAPT Stinson. It was tentatively agreed that time remains Friday morning. The exact date for our next meeting has not been set.

The meeting was adjourned at 1015.

### ***Category Coin (LCDR Joshua Schier)***

- No report at this meeting.

### ***COF/COA Report (LCDR Sylvie Cohen, reported by CDR Sheryl Lyss)***

- 2010 Category Day is currently being worked on. The 2010 COF/COA meeting will be held in San Diego 5-24-10 to 5-27-10 with Category Day to be held on May 25<sup>th</sup>.

### ***Communications Committee (CDR Susan Lukacs)***

- CDR Lukacs noted that the transition from the PPAC website to a new server has occurred. The website address is usphs-ppac.net.
- The communications needs survey had a 36% response rate.

### ***Compensation Committee (CDR Chineta Eure-Miller and CDR Kevin Cain)***

- The committee has been working on a White Paper. No further details are available at this time.

### ***Membership (CDR Sheryl Lyss)***

- The committee announced the selection of 2010 members.
- New Voting Members are as follows: LCDR Sylvie Cohen, CDR Paul Jung, CDR Susan Lukacs, CDR Narayan Nair, and CDR Marc Osborn.
- New Ex-Officio (non voting members who have served 3 years) are as follows: RADM James Galloway, CAPT Rosemarie Hirsch, CAPT Susan Wang, CAPT Darius Yorichi, and CDR Alicia Vantran.
- New Affiliate Members are as follows: CDR Jeffrey Schulden, CAPT Theresa Smith, CDR Thomas White, and CAPT Lydia Soto-Torres.

### ***Mental Health (CAPT Marc Safran)***

- This committee last met in September.
- The committee is continuing to consider mental health needs of PHS medical officers and challenges PHS medical officers face in meeting mental health needs of the patients they serve.
- CAPT Safran reminded that the committee continues to invite input and suggestions from all PHS physicians.

### ***Outreach Committee (CAPT Joannie Shen)***

- The following Outreach Subcommittee report was received:

Outreach Subcommittee report: Summary from an overseas teleconference call organized by Bangkok COA (Friday, Nov. 13 at 2 pm Bangkok time/3 pm Beijing time) Ret. CAPT Gerry Farrell updated officers on the GI Bill, the new Surgeon General (some officers in

remote locations had difficulties accessing the SG video) and answered questions from officers, such as the current status of CC transformation and COA efforts in engaging overseas officers.

One specific concern expressed by officers is about communication with CC HQ. The multiplicity of access channels (For example, there is CCMIS, with different faxes and emails for various information; then there is OFRD website vs. the new Direct Access; but Direct Access reportedly doesn't work well) poses a hardship for officers in remote relocations with limited access.

### ***Promotion Guidelines Committee (CAPT David Goldman & CDR Rochelle Nolte)***

- No report at this meeting.

### ***Readiness Committee (CDR Kevin Nolan & LCDR Paul Kruszka)***

- LCDR Kruszka reported that this committee has been making quarterly calls to medical officers to update readiness.
- OFRD has calculated medical category readiness to be 88%. CDR Kruszka calculated a lower percentage.

### ***Recruitment (CDR George Ceremuga, CAPT Nancy Sahakian, and CDR Narayan Nair)***

- This committee in conjunction with the Career Development and Training Committee is working to establish a mentorship program for both new officers and officers that express a need for a mentor. This is undergoing development but in part is waiting on the new Associate Recruiter Program to be finalized.
- The following committee minutes were received and are posted on the PPAC Portal:

PPAC Recruitment Subcommittee Minutes  
October 8, 2009  
1-2PM ET

Present: CDR Ceremuga, CAPT Sahakian, CDR Weiss, CDR Wong

1. Discussed system currently used by Indian Health Service (MORE) to assist with physician recruitment. MORE includes an electronic database on the IHS Website in which physician candidates fill out information regarding themselves. This information can then be reviewed by individuals within IHS who would like to place a physician in specific available job position.
2. There currently are 4 medical school positions per year in the USUHS medical school designated for Commissioned Corps officers. Last year there were 24 applications for these positions. NIAID and IHS are each able to support 2 students per year.

Students applying for the NIAID sponsored positions must be committed to a career as a clinical or basic science researcher in either infectious diseases or allergy/immunology and must have undergraduate or post-graduate research experience. Upon completion of medical school, NIAID sponsored medical students must enter an ACGME-approved residency program in internal medicine or pediatrics and on completion must apply to an NIAID infectious diseases or allergy/immunology fellowship training program.

Students applying for IHS sponsored positions must be committed to a primary care career serving the American Indian and Alaska Native people. Upon completion of medical school, IHS-sponsored students must enter an ACGME approved residency in family medicine, pediatrics, internal medicine, emergency medicine, psychiatry, obstetrics and gynecology, radiology, general surgery, anesthesia or orthopedic surgery.

There are currently 17 CC officers enrolled in the medical school. For those interested, the weblink on the USUHS website is <http://www.usuhs.mil/usphs/>. For additional information, please contact CAPT Mary Porvaznik MD (PHS Senior Advisor to USUHS Brigade) at [mary.porvaznik@usuhs.mil](mailto:mary.porvaznik@usuhs.mil).

3. CDR George Ceremuga has been assigned to the DCCR committee looking at physician recruitment issues and how physician recruitment can be enhanced. Others on this committee include CAPT Coppola, CAPT Helminiak, and CDR Olnes.
4. CDR Weiss commented on the difficulty of getting into the Associate Recruiter Program with the recent program revision which has placed all applications on hold and how being in the Associate Recruiter Program is one of the benchmarks for physician promotion. DCCR is aware of this and is currently trying to remove this as a benchmark, especially now since the number of individuals who will be able to become Associate Recruiters is restricted to 20 per category.
5. We have not yet received the new application form for the revised Associate Recruiter Program but we expect to receive this within the next couple of months. When received, all prior Associate Recruiters and all PPAC recruitment subcommittee members will receive an email from either CDR Ceremuga or CAPT Sahakian. For others, information regarding the application process will be included on a newsletter from the PPAC.
6. CDR Wong suggested that we expand a program in place at Johns Hopkins pediatric residency program to other locations. The current program involves an affiliation with the IHS hospital in Tuba City, AZ which pays for the salary of one of the pediatric residents. Pediatric residents at Johns Hopkins are then required to do a rotation at the IHS hospital in Tuba City. CDR Holve in Tuba City manages this program. We have already made contact with CDR Holve and he will be speaking at the IHS Combined Councils meeting regarding this program

so that the program can be expanded to other USPHS sites. CAPT Helminiak will also be at the Combined Councils meeting to talk with CEOs, clinical directors, and chief medical officers of medical facilities on recruitment issues.

7. Next meeting is December 10 at 11AM ET.

Respectfully submitted,  
CAPT Nancy Sahakian

***Retention (CDR Marc Osborn presented by CAPT Carlos Plasencia))***

- Work has been completed on a guide to exit surveys that might be helpful for identification of retention issues. This will go to the committee for approval and then will go for focus group facilitation to start on the actual work of the survey.

***Retention, Medical Officer Liason to OCCO (CAPT Carlos Plasencia)***

- The CAPT spoke about the new physician's pilot program that allows interservice transfers of more senior medical officers from other services and that allows commissioning of older civilian physicians and starting them out at higher grades.
- In the future, OCCFM plans to evaluate the program.

**Related Comments: Medical category officers continue to express concerns with the "Physicians Pilot Program," noting for example that giving away higher ranks to bring in more physicians (from the general population of civilians or from other uniformed services) without first requiring them to prove themselves in PHS may be a risky strategy for PHS and the populations it serves for many reasons. There is also concern that using higher ranks to boost recruitment could ultimately reduce respect for the ranks themselves and for PHS. In addition, because of the limited number of higher P-grade ranks for PHS medical officers in the Regular Corps, each new recruit brought in under a higher grade under this "Pilot Program" seems to block promotions of medical officers who are already serving in the Corps and in that way seems to some medical officers not to sufficiently value their demonstrated service to PHS.**

***Retirement (CAPT Darius Yorichi)***

- It was noted that there are no new items to report at this meeting but that officers have requested that a retirement seminar be available on line.

***Uniform (CDR Lana Shiu and LCDR Ken Norris)***

- The consideration for category insignias continues to be pursued and will be discussed by PAC chairs.

**ADJOURNMENT**

CDR Tejashri Purohit-Sheth adjourned the meeting at 1510.

**FUTURE PPAC MEETINGS**

***The next PPAC meeting will be on 1-28-10. Meetings are held via Teleconference.***

***The next PPAC Forum will be held on 12-16-09.***

Respectfully Submitted,  
CAPT Barbara Stinson  
PPAC Executive Secretary  
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