

## The Medical Service Corps

56<sup>th</sup> Birthday August 4, 2003

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The history of the Medical Service Corps includes the history of its predecessor, the Navy Hospital Corps. During World War I, the number of warrant officers in the Hospital Corps increased significantly and sixty-five Pharmacists and Chief Pharmacists were given temporary commissions in the Medical Corps of the Navy. Although a few of these officers retained their temporary commissions following the end of the war, the majority reverted to their prior status.

The need for an all officer category composed of individuals trained in administrative, professional, and scientific specialties traditionally allied with medicine had long been recognized. During World War II 1429 officers were given temporary appointments in the Hospital Corps during the war. In addition, a total of 845 pharmacists, optometrists, and other specialists and scientists allied to medicine and dentistry were given temporary appointments as Naval Reserve officers. The vital role played by these two groups of officers in the accomplishment of the wartime mission of the Navy Medical Department further emphasized the need for a permanent officer category to compliment and supplement the existing officer corps than compromising the Medical Department.

The Medical Service Corps was authorized 4 August 1947 as a staff corps of the Navy by the Army -Navy Medical Service Corps Act of 1947. The Navy Medical Service Corps was created with four specialty sections: Supply and Administration, Optometry, Allied Sciences, and Pharmacy. The authorized personnel strength of the Corps was limited to 20% of the number of Medical Corps officers.

Today, the Medical Service Corps is the most highly diversified Corps within the Navy Medical Department. An integral part of Navy medicine, the Medical Service Corps is comprised of a multidisciplinary team of commissioned Naval officers in clinical, scientific, and administrative health care fields. The Medical Service Corps now has more than 3,500 active duty and reserve officers in the grades of Ensign to Rear Admiral. Health care scientists and clinical care specialists make up about 60 percent of the total Corps, serving in 22 different specialties performing countless duties on multiple platforms continuing the mission, which was identified over 52 years ago. Health care administrators comprise the remaining 40 percent. Medical Service Corps officers serve in more than 250 Naval and medical commands throughout the world. About 65 percent serve in facilities delivering direct patient care and 35 percent serve in operational units, training and research commands, occupational and preventive medicine units, material and logistic support commands, and headquarters commands.

Here in Sigonella, 24 Medical Service Corps officers are assigned to the U.S. Naval Hospital and 10 to the Navy Environmental Protection Mobile Unit - 7 (NEPMU-7), with the following specialties: Clinical Psychology, Dietetics/Food Management, Entomology, Environmental Health, Financial Management, Health Care Administration, Health Care Information Systems, Industrial Hygiene, Material Logistics, Medical Technology, Microbiology, Optometry, Patient Administration, Pharmacy, Physical Therapy, Physician Assistants, Plans Operations & Medical Intelligence and Podiatry.