



**3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command
16th Sustainment Brigade
Public Affairs Office**

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Medics fast with hands, slow with minds

MEDIC

By Sgt. Keith M. Anderson

16th SB Public Affairs

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE Q-WEST, Iraq — The medics at the troop medical clinic here have an expression, “Be fast with your hands, but slow with your mind.”

The expression, often repeated by Staff Sgt. Robert Norton, TMC non-commissioned officer in charge, 16th Special Troops Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, reminds Soldiers to work quickly, but carefully.

“You have to work quickly when someone is seriously injured, but you must go slowly in your mind to make sure you don't make any mistakes; and you have to be fast with your hands, because seconds matter. People can deteriorate quickly from seemingly non-serious wounds because the right life-saving steps aren't taken,” Norton said.

The 31-year-old combat medic from Tallahassee, Fla., has seen a lot during his four deployments, but the hardest time for him was when he had to treat a good friend who was injured in a car accident in the U.S..

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“One of my NCOs got hit by a truck,” Norton said. “He had massive trauma; just about every bone in his body was crushed.”

Norton said he had to mentally detach himself to save his friend’s life.

“I was thinking, ‘I don’t want to see this, but I have to do this,’” Norton said. “How do we see what we see and still be cool, calm and efficient? I wonder about that myself sometimes.”

The pace in the clinic doesn’t allow much time to prepare yourself.

Sgt. Evelyn Pollard, evacuation non-commissioned officer at the TMC, 16th STB, didn’t have much time to prepare herself for combat medicine when she arrived in July 2008 to begin her first deployment.

“The first week we were here we brought in three Iraqis that had been injured during a VBIED (vehicle-borne improvised explosive device) attack,” said the 25-year-old combat medic from Brooklyn, N.Y. “The most seriously injured Iraqi had shrapnel wounds over much of his body, a bone protruding from his leg, and was covered in blood. I think my training was good, but nothing prepares you for when it actually happens.”

Pollard, who doubles as an information management officer for the clinic, and as a combat lifesaver instructor for the base, doesn’t get much down time to practice her yoga, but said the job is worth it.

“When someone comes back and says thanks for what you did — it’s the greatest feeling in the world,” Pollard said.

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The married mother of one plans to reenlist to get the additional skill identifier “M6,” which means she wants to go through a year-long Army nursing program.

Her husband Christopher, Jr., who works at Child and Youth Sports in U.S. Army Garrison Bamberg, Germany, supports her.

“He misses the fact that I’m not there, but he knows this is important to me, so he supports me,” she said.

The “level 1-plus” clinic doesn’t have a surgery ward, and has only minimal lab capabilities, but medics there stay busy, Norton said.

“Last week we saw 444 Soldiers, contractors and local nationals, mostly stomach aches, back pain and joint problems,” he said. “With the nature of what we’re seeing, and making sure we do the right thing for the patients, and the hours, we put in long days.”

Norton, who originally wanted to be infantry, said he hasn’t looked back.

“It’s rewarding, because I think anyone can go out and shoot, maim, kill and blow things up, but it takes something more to save lives,” he said.



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Spc. Joshua Ryan, medic, 16th Special Troops Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, administers the influenza vaccine to Staff Sgt. Jacqueline Atkins, 574th Quartermaster Co., 16th STB, at the troop medical clinic at Contingency Operating Base Q-West Nov. 10. “I love being a medic in the Army,” said Ryan, a 20-year-old from Eleva, Wis.. “I get to help people, travel all over the world and learn new things about my job every day.” (Photo by Sgt. Keith M. Anderson)