



Society of Army Physician Assistants

PA WEEK OCT 6-12, 2019

MAJOR ASPIRATIONS

MAJOR ASPIRATIONS IS A Q&A SESSION THAT HIGHLIGHTS INTERESTING AND UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MID-LEVEL PAs. THESE SENIOR CAPTAINS AND MAJORS ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN ARMY MEDICINE.

WHITE HOUSE MEDICAL UNIT

BY MAJ Adhana McCarthy

CPT (P) Jennifer Smith, IPAP Class 03-09, describes her experience serving on the White House Medical Unit.

Could you describe a typical day?

It's extremely variable. I'm either in one of the clinics or I'm on the road for the different events. The job is very heavy on planning. We had to make sure that we had a cohesive support plan for all of our locations.

What's the best part of the job?

The best thing is the travel. Each new location will have things that are slightly different. It keeps me on my toes. I also get to see a lot of locations that the rest of the public doesn't get to see.

What's the worst part of the job?

It's an all-consuming job. Out of 30 days per month, I was on the road for 27 or 28 of those days. Even when I was back home, there were lots of 24-hour shifts. For my colleagues who had families, it was reminiscent of PA school, family time was rare.

What personalities do well in the position?

People who are excited about traveling. The PAs travel the most out of the group. If you like medical contingency planning and a constant challenge, this is a job for you. It's important to be self-motivated and to have a positive attitude. Interpersonal dynamics are really important with this job. I was interacting with people from all walks of life from generals, ambassadors, FBI agents, white house staff members, secret service, and special ops. It's important to understand all of their cultures to work together as a team.

What biggest thing you learned about yourself?

I had to learn about the pressure of being in a role with the smallest mistake could make a big difference or how to show up quickly on multiple time sensitive project. I had to improve my personal interaction style for every person. I learned to adjust my communication to fit with how people receive information. I learned very quickly to consider people who don't think like me.

What's a lesson you will take with you about the military?

I didn't even know that position existed before I saw the announcement. But, on the regular Army side, I'm used to having people with different skills and motivation levels. At places that are more selective, it's fantastic to work in a team where people are super motivated to make sure the mission was complete. It was really cool to see that happen.

Read any good books lately?

Books. *Radical Candor*. It's really interesting from a leader perspective. It talks about how people tend to avoid difficult conversations. But, you need to know that by speaking candidly, you're doing something good for the person as well as the organization.



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THE OLD GUARD

BY CPT Corey Campbell

CPT Vince vanderMaarel, IPAP Class 03-10, describes his experience serving with 3rd Infantry Regiment, The Old Guard.

Could you describe a typical day?

I still run a typical aid station. Usually run sick call 0600-0800 with ceremonial practice training from 0800-1000. Rest of the day are schedule appointments. What stands out the most is the ceremonial support required for the unit to include funeral honors and all ceremonies in the capital region.

What's the best part of the job?

TBeing a member of this organization. This is such an important mission here and especially at Arlington National Cemetery. We need to make sure the Soldiers who perform these critical ceremonial missions are medically ready and seeing that in action is the best part of my day. Just outside my window are Caisson horse stables; the same horses who would carry flag draped coffins in Arlington National Cemetery and for State Funerals.

What's the worst part of the job?

I really can't think anything bad about the job specifically. If anything I would say I dislike MEDPROs and some of the aspects that aren't working. I wouldn't even say the traffic is bad since we arrive prior to rush hour. This is a great opportunity and I have enjoyed every part of this job.

What personalities do well in the position?

You have to maintain a flexibility to transfer from a healthcare to a ceremonial role and back into a healthcare position. To be ever mindful of a military support role. Being flexible enough to work with your command groups and maintain employability of the Soldier. For example, our ceremonial shoes literally have oak soles with metal clips on the toe and heel therefore, foot and ankle pain is a serious problem here. If we need to rest a Soldier, we work with the command group to find novel ways to maintain employability for the Soldier to support the mission.

What biggest thing you learned about yourself?

Before coming here, I did not appreciate the ceremonial aspect of the Army as much as I do now. When you are in a line unit it's hard to imagine how much this can impact is on the public. But being here I have learned the importance of the ceremonial role.

What's a lesson you will take with you about the military?

The public looks as us and sees a reflection of everything good about themselves in every Soldier and in what they want us to be; there is a huge responsibility there.

Read any good books lately?

Complications: A surgeon's notes on an Imperfect Science by Atul Gawndne. It addresses some of the uncertainty that we have in practicing medicine that we try to ignore. We wish that medicine was more of a science and this author highlights and appreciates that aspect. That's what makes medicine great.



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AAPA TRAINING WITH INDUSTRY

BY MAJ Adhana McCarthy

CPT (P) Courtney Legendre, Class 01-08 discusses her opportunity to train with the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA)

Could you describe a typical day?

I reviewed State Legislation as well as interacted with different societies and lobbyists to change laws for PAs. I learned how the whole process worked. We worked with the DoD to include Indian Health Service to have their policies become more PA friendly and mirror the policies of the Veteran's Administration. I also learned about CME development and how to get it approved, both as a speaker and institution. I learned about accrediting PA programs as well as how the relationship between AAPA and NCCPA worked.

What's the best part of the job?

Seeing the variability among all the state laws was really eye-opening. There were a lot of privileges that I have in the Army that I take for granted and are not allowed in certain states. At the time I worked, in Kentucky, PAs couldn't prescribe Schedule II medications at all. In Colorado as a new PA, a doctor has to co-sign the first 500 of your charts. Also, ordering durable medical equipment is limited in many states.

What's the worst part of the job?

I absolutely loved everything about it. I got to wear civilian clothes every day and really enjoyed the assignment.

It's was discouraging to see how far we have to for PAs across the country to practice at the level of our training. Also, compared to other healthcare professions, we contribute the least to our Political Action Committee (PAC). We could do a lot more if we participated more.

What personalities do well in the position?

People who are willing to network with other people, who are passionate about the field and who want to learn more about the profession as a whole. There was a lot that I didn't know about the position going in. I would have linked up with senior PA leaders earlier if I had to do it over again. There is a lot of potential in that position.

What biggest thing you learned about yourself?

It reminded me about why I got into the field in the first place. I also saw that there were other ways to be in the profession that did not involve patient care all of the time. I learned about how much I enjoyed advocating for our profession. It was never something I thought I would participate in.

What's a lesson you will take with you about the military?

IPAP (Interservice Physician Assistant Program) still produces the most PAs. The more we teach our young PAs about how to advocate for our profession, the better it will be for the PAs, especially as people retire and transition to civilian life.

Read any good books lately?

Why We Sleep by Matthew Walker. It talks about the effects of lack of sleep on mental health. It addresses important topics like suicide, sleep medications, and substance abuse, it's a pretty good book.