



SUTURING: Vanessa Dudley, with the Air Force National Guard, practices sewing sutures on a chicken breast during military trauma training at Scottsdale Healthcare Osborn hospital on Monday. At right, Stuart Richards, a physician's assistant from Chandler, teaches the group as a volunteer.

PHOTOS BY PAUL O'NEILL, TRIBUNE

Hospital's program trains military medics

Personnel use their skills in hands-on experience

By JULIE JANOVSKY
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Master Sgt. Tony Gurrola and his colleagues, clad in camouflage fatigues, arrived at Scottsdale Healthcare's Osborn campus Monday with a special mission in mind.

The more than a dozen men and women representing the Arizona National Guard, U.S. Air Force and Army Reserves came to learn how to save lives.

"Once we get to the theater, there is no opportunity to learn. The staff (here) is there to teach and support us and get our hands wet," said Gurrola, 40, a member of the Air Force, stationed with Luke Air Force Base's 56th Medical Group.

The more he and his colleagues can train, the better prepared they'll be to handle all types of combat-related injuries they may one day encounter, he said.

Scottsdale Healthcare said the military training program is the only one of its type in the country that works with multiple branches of the armed forces to get military medical personnel ready to treat a variety of combat injuries, including burns, blast fractures, traumas



TRAINING: Registered nurse Randy Derr goes over medical supplies with a group of military trainees.

and wounds.

The health care company's leaders said the 4-year-old program, which caters to everyone from military medics to surgeons, is another way its staff of medical practitioners and educators can serve the community.

"We are invested in helping our community," said Tom Sadvary, president and CEO of Scottsdale Healthcare, in a written statement.

"This training program has allowed medical caregivers to better treat our military personnel."

More than 300 military medical personnel have received trauma skill training since the program's inception, he said.

The monthly program, known as the Readiness Skill Sustainment Training Program (RSSTP), is designed to help military medical personnel meet and renew their skills, which include suturing, casting and splinting.

It also provides hands-on experience, under direct supervision, in practicing their skills, explained Deborah Roepke, associate director of government relations at Scottsdale Health-

care. For local military bases, such as Luke Air Force Base in Glendale, having the additional specialized training close to home is a luxury.

"Scottsdale (Healthcare) is the closest program of this type to Luke Air Force Base. The primary opportunity it offers is experience with trauma, wound care and burn patients," said Col. Joseph Chozinski, 56th Medical Group commander.

Chozinski said Luke Air Force Base's hospital and emergency room closed four years ago and has used several trauma training programs across the country

since then to give their medical staff practical experience in all facets of emergency care.

Gurrola, who expects to be deployed to the Middle East sometime this year, said although he's trained as an orthopedic technician, he may be assigned to the operating room during his tour of duty.

He said it's important for he and his colleagues who don't work in an operating room to brush up on procedures for traction and post-anesthesia care.

The opportunities he's given to "scrub in" and observe Scottsdale Healthcare's surgical teams up close will only make him better prepared, he said.

Sgt. Jose Ramos, 32, a 12-year medic with the Army Reserves, said the readiness training is a good supplement to the registered nurse coursework he's been studying at Grand Canyon University in Phoenix.

But unlike nursing school, which has specified tasks, he said the military expects their medical personnel to jump in and help out with all types of requests.

"The military requires you to know how to suture. And in the military, you don't send for labs. You do everything yourself," Ramos added.

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