



Media Release

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Darnall graduates four physician assistants, the number one growing medical profession

FORT HOOD, Texas – Four Soldiers became physician assistants (PA) after graduating from the Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center Interservice Physician Assistant Program (IPAP) Sept. 26.

Capt. Robert Finn, 1st Lts. Gabriel Kennedy, Lookmon Omisola, and Seth Knowles successfully completed the grueling two-year course of study which earned them a master's degree from the University of Nebraska.

These graduates will now join approximately 1,000 active-duty PAs who provide health care to beneficiaries across the Army, all over the world. They serve primary as a battalion medical officer treating battalion Soldiers and providing general medical training to the medics employed in the battalion aid station to support combat operations.

As former enlisted Soldiers with multiple deployment experience, the new PAs know the importance of providing experienced medical care for Soldiers on the front lines.

While it wasn't done under austere conditions, Finn did liken the program to a deployment.

"In many ways it was like a deployment. We were here, but we were not, because we were studying and training every day," Finn said. "The pace was fast and furious. You could not afford to miss a minute of anything and risk getting behind."

The IPAP program includes one year of didactic course work at Fort Sam Houston and one year of clinical training here.

Students rotate through a variety of CRDAMC clinics and departments such as emergency services, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology and family practice to gain clinical knowledge and experience. CRDAMC has been a training site for Physician Assistant students since the creation of the PA profession in the early 1970's.

The program is the most arduous, competitive and stressful physician assistant program in the world, according to Clinical Coordinator Maj. Douglas Roach. It has a 20 percent attrition rate and a 50 percent divorce rate.

“There is so much to learn in their short time here. It really is non-stop. Students need to be studying four or more hours each night if they want to be more than mediocre,” said Roach, who has been the clinical coordinator for three years.

This was his last class—and his best, Roach said. “They all had the discipline to study and to stay focused on their work. They were a tight-knit group and spurred each other on,” he added. “They did exactly what they were supposed to do and I know they will be excellent PAs.”

For more information on IPAP, visit <http://www.crdamc.amedd.army.mil/med-ed/ipap.aspx>