



Base Realignment and Closure

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WHMC Neurosurgery Flight moves to BAMC, no change in care

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The Wilford Hall Medical Center Neurosurgery Flight is scheduled to move to Brooke Army Medical Center May 3. The move is part of the Base Realignment and Closure process to move all WHMC inpatient care to BAMC and form the San Antonio Military Medical Center.

“This move is part of the BRAC plan to establish an inpatient center at BAMC where all military trauma will be conducted,” said Lt. Col. (Dr.) David Garrett, chief of neurosurgery at WHMC. “The subspecialties associated with the trauma mission are moving a few weeks ahead of the merger of the trauma departments and general surgery so any new challenges associated with our consolidation can be solved before WHMC moves all trauma services to BAMC.”

The two military neurosurgery Departments consolidated as a SAMMC service with one chief in 2008. The consolidation occurred to help cover deployments and other military missions, which affected the different services at various times.

Five Air Force neurosurgeons and an administrative technician will move from WHMC to the BAMC neurosurgery department on the second floor. All inpatient and outpatient services will move, with some neurosurgery still handled at WHMC, on a case-by-case-basis.

“There will be no change in care for military beneficiaries and we will probably be able to increase overall numbers because many of the duplications being performed simultaneously in two different military centers will now be eliminated,” Garrett said.

“Neurosurgery is typically a low-manned specialty and having two neurosurgeons on call, one to cover BAMC and one to cover WHMC, is spending a labor resource that can be better done with consolidating our manning in a single location.”

Neurosurgery has been a service at Wilford Hall since the 1960’s.

There was once a neurosurgery residency program at Wilford Hall and Dr. David Dean, now a neurosurgeon at BAMC, was once a resident in that program,” Garrett said. “The last head of the neurosurgery residency program was Lt. Gen. (Dr.) Paul Meyers, who later served two terms as the Air Force Surgeon General.”

Astronaut Michael Collins was treated by Meyers at Wilford Hall in the late 60’s. The incident is described in his book, “Carrying the Fire: An Astronaut’s Journeys.”

More recently, the WHMC Neurosurgery Flight became one of the first departments in the country to perform vagal nerve stimulation for the treatment of major depression.