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Darnall military pharmacist recognized for outstanding performance and contributions to career field

By Patricia Deal, CRDAMC Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas--Lieutenant Col. Gwendolyn Thompson, chief of the Pharmacy Department at Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center, has been selected as one of three finalists for the 2011 Next Generation Pharmacist™ Awards Military Pharmacist of the Year.

The awards program, sponsored by Pharmacy Times magazine and Parata Systems, is open to licensed pharmacists, student pharmacists, and pharmacy technicians practicing in all environments, including chain, community, hospital outpatient, and government settings. Nearly 350 nominees from across the country competed in 11 distinct categories.

“This was the first year for the separate Military Pharmacist category,” Thompson said. “While we could apply in many of the other categories, military pharmacists lobbied for a ‘military only’ category, as we do have responsibilities and tasks that are unique just to a military environment.”

While her civilian counterparts might not be as familiar with the special demands and challenges of being a military pharmacist, Thompson has spent over 20 years as an Army pharmacist. She served as an enlisted pharmacy tech (including a tour at Fort Hood) before going to school to become a pharmacist.

“I’ve always liked the idea of being able to help people. Everyone is familiar with medications as they’ve either had to take something themselves at some point in their life, or know someone who has. The idea of how the various types of medicines helped to treat different medical conditions just kind of appealed to me,” she said.

Helping people has been central in her career, which is full of awards and accolades for both her clinical and research skills. She has served in a variety of assignments at pharmacies throughout the Army in the United States, Germany and Iraq.

Thompson has a Doctor of Pharmacy degree, Pharmacy Practice Residency, and is a Board Certified Pharmacotherapy Specialist. She was awarded for the proficiency designator by the Army for her acumen as a clinical pharmacist and was also awarded a designator as a strategist.

She’s accomplished many “firsts” in her field, such as having started the first pharmacist-run clinic in disease state management for asthma, diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia, tobacco cessation, and anticoagulation at Darnall.

Her most recent accomplishment has been the sponsorship of the first Army Pharmacy Study grant ever received. The “High Performance Pharmacy” study project entailed extensive research, surveys and site visits to various military medical

clinics and centers to determine the best pharmacy practices and challenges within. The study has recently concluded and Thompson will present the findings, which includes several recommendations to enhance pharmacy practice throughout the Army, to Department of Army leadership.

As the pharmacy consultant to the Office of The Surgeon General's Pain Management Task Force in 2009, Thompson was instrumental in the group achieving its goal to establish Integrative Pain Centers at Army medical centers. The centers are designed to provide optimal quality of life for Soldiers and other patients with acute and chronic pain, utilizing holistic, multidisciplinary, state of the art/science modalities and technologies.

While she's accomplished much in the career field, her most meaningful experience was during her deployment to Iraq at the Army's largest combat hospital.

"It was a really rewarding (and emotional) time to be right there on the front lines. Every minute of every day there I was able to do what I was meant to do— help Soldiers heal from their injuries. I helped them understand their medication regimens, and ensuring them that the medication provided could help resolve their issues," she said. "In addition, I felt we were making a difference with our Iraqi counterparts, who would come in to learn about the latest developments in different medications and how we helped the wounded."

Thompson will join other finalists at the second annual awards ceremony on August 29 in Boston, where the winner in each category will be announced. One of those winners will also be chosen as the "2011 Next-Generation Pharmacist."

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Lt. Col. Thompson testing

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#### CUTLINES:

Lieutenant Col. Gwendolyn Thompson, chief of the Pharmacy Department at Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center, tests patient Jille Brodeur's blood clotting time as part of her duties as a clinical pharmacist. For her many career accomplishments and contributions to further the career field, Thompson has been selected as one of three finalists for the 2011 Next Generation Pharmacist™ Awards Military Pharmacist of the Year. (U.S. Army photo by Patricia Deal, CRDAMC Public Affairs)

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