



# Inside SWCS

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## Army Green goes Carolina Blue

### SF medic instructors build their own hands-on curriculum at UNC



Sgt. 1st Class David Angle help dress a burn victim's wounds at the North Carolina Jaycee Burn Center in Chapel Hill, N.C.



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A young man lies on a hospital bed as two nurses slowly dress the wounds on his legs, which are burned and blistered from foot to thigh. As they work, Sgt. 1st Class David Angle is chatting up the patient while helping the nurses cut and wrap bandages.

"We did some skin grafting a week ago," Angle said. "This special dressing has a lot of antibiotic material in it – a lot of stuff to try and keep that wound moist, to promote healing." He pays attention to the nurses' technique so no one has to come back later to fix his work. When it's done right, the dressing will fight infections without hiding any potential problems.

This isn't a military hospital, and the patient is no Soldier, but Angle, a Special Forces medical NCO at the Special Warfare Medical Group (Airborne), will carry these lessons about long-term health care to the rest of the special-operations medical community.

It's all in a day's work at the North Carolina Jaycee Burn Center in Chapel Hill, N.C.

It's no secret that Special Forces medical sergeants' training is extensive. What's so special about the fact that the SWMG(A) lets its instructors, like Angle, spend four weeks at the University of North Carolina?

"Most [hospital] rotations that our medics go

through are very procedure-oriented," said 1st Sgt. Todd Landis, who started the SWMG(A)'s partnership with UNC in the summer of 2010.

"We graduate our medics at the novice level, we give them the basic tools to be successful," Landis said, "but how do we make them experts?"

Deployment experience, often in combat, plays a big part in a medic's career, Angle said. If a professional musician never plays in that big concert or recital, then what's the point of all those hours of practicing their instrument?

SWMG(A) instructors, however, perform their big recitals every day, in front of an audience of special-operations medical students who need to get the right information, and they need it to stick.

"Through the Advanced Medical Instructor Training program with UNC, we can focus our instructors in on areas they need to be more proficient in," Landis said. "It's a perfect fit for building that depth of knowledge."

The core concept here is flexibility. Angle wasn't handed a checklist when he arrived at UNC, he was handed a pager. He built his own curriculum, so he's learning different lessons than the five instructors who've been there before him.

"Angle was really interested in trauma, and working with our nurses here in the burn center," said Dr. Bruce Cairns, the director of the Jaycee Burn Center.

The center is the gateway to the rest of the UNC health care system. From the emergency room to physical therapy to psychology, Cairns can reach out and touch every department within the system – and so can a SWMG(A) instructor during his four weeks attached to the center. Other instructors have chosen to spend their time on amputations, vascular surgery, outpatient work and anesthesia, for example.

"Just as these Soldiers are trusted with making their own decisions in the field, we do the same with them up here," Cairns said. "Only they know what they need to do to get the maximum benefit out of being here."

"We pretty much have free reign of the hospital," Angle said.

You don't heal a burn, you can only treat it; the patient with the burned legs, still has a long way to go, but the idea of helping in a Special Forces Soldier's professional education brings a brief smile to his face.

Angle is at the end of his SWCS rotation and is using this UNC rotation to squeeze in some training before reporting to a Special Forces team, where he'll be the senior medical sergeant for the 12-man unit.

"If they do their job really well, nobody will ever hear of it. If something bad happens, everybody will hear about it," Cairns said. "That kind of commitment and professionalism is something we need in medicine. You'd be pretty hard-pressed to find somebody more committed and dedicated than these guys."