

A different type of drill

By MASTER SGT. JACK LEE

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RESERVE, Kan.- Soldiers of the 912th Medical Company (Dental Services), based in Independence, are spending two weeks in a very unique situation. They packed up their dental equipment and set it up in the community gym of the Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska Reservation.

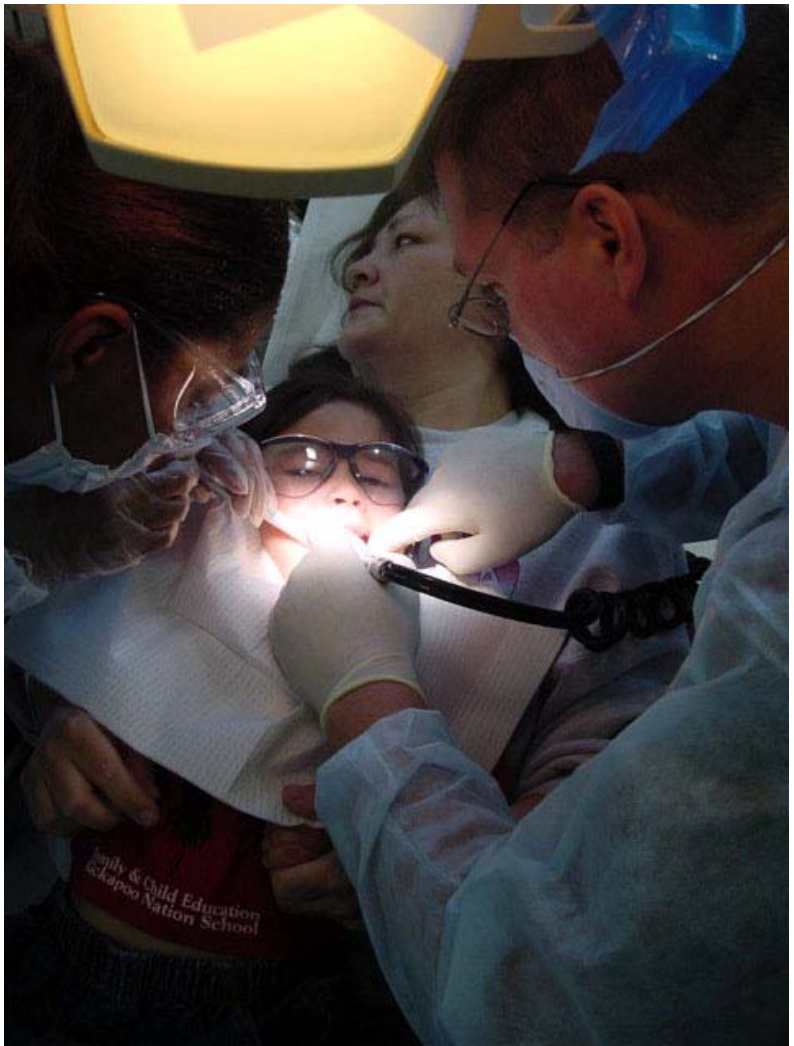
According to DefenseLink, Innovative Readiness Training, as this period of Annual Training was called, is not part of a military unit's current training schedule. IRT is a separate training option for a commander to consider, using in the normal training planning process.

"This is a fantastic opportunity, for us," said Capt. Rex Monif, Tekamah, Neb, who in civilian life is the Dental Director of the Omaha Tribe at Macy, Neb. "We feel that we are able to give back to the community ... we are helping people in our own back yard."

That is, what the Walking Shield American Indian Society is about, garnishing support in its mission of improving the quality. of life for American Indians living on reservations.

This is a core component of IRT, providing a direct and lasting benefit to the community. Not only does the community benefit from receiving dental treatment free of charge, the soldiers are able to hone their military skills, too. "This is an opportunity for our soldiers to work with the equipment," Monif said.

And work they did. Eight dental stations were set up with five dentists rotating between the stations. On the first day of operation, they saw 150 patients. Many procedures that day were screenings (examinations) with an appointment to return at a later date, but they performed extractions and fillings, also.



Pemme Negonsott, 3, is lying on terry Blacksmith, her cousin, as Capt. Dan Convey places a sealant on a molar, while dental assistant Spec. Prenness Wilson assists. Soldiers of the 912th Medical Company, independence, was at the Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska community gym in Reserve, Kan., Providing dental service to an under served population.

Mouse Medicine Horse, 37, from the Kickapoo tribe, Horton, Kan., saw the dental service advertised at the health center and decided to take advantage. "I am very grateful and wanted to pass the word that all natives were welcome," she said. She volunteered to drive anyone to the clinic who needed a ride.

"Many natives can't afford a dentist and don't pay attention to their teeth," Medicine Horse said.

As if to attest to that statement, Col. C. Scott Wilkerson, a dentist in-both civilian and military life, said, "We have had a high number of extractions, probably more than we would have seen in our own practices."

Sandra Keo, Chairperson of the Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Missouri, said this is the first time this has happened to the tribes in this area. Expectations have been exceeded she said, adding that it was projected that 40 patients a day could be seen, but often that figure was surpassed.

The level of treatment also amazed Keo. "One man had his teeth cleaned, an extraction, and three fillings all in an hour. A woman had a tooth straightened; the dentist just turned it around a little. She came out with this big smile, showing it off to everyone who would look," Keo said.

Another person was showing off her, dental work. Pemme Negonsott, 3, from the Kickapoo tribe, Horton, Kan., had a sealant put on a molar. She opened wide and showed it off to anyone who asked. She was one of 38 patients seen on a, recent morning.

But dental work wasn't the only activity in Reserve for the 912th. A dental health fair was held and other community health providers were invited. To stir interest in the fair, the 912th held a hot dog lunch and pilots from the 244th Aviation Brigade, New Century Kan., flew in a CH-47 Chinook and landed nearby This attracted much attention, which is what the 912th wanted.

Eat, tour the helicopter ... and visit the dental health fair, too. ,,

Booths included information on aging, alcoholism, and blood sugar screening, to name a few.

The 912th manned their own booths, too.

Specialist Kim Pitts, White City, Kan., and a dental hygienist in civilian life, was at the enamel and fluoride booth discussing good brushing. She had an egg that had the shell removed to demonstrate what happens when the tooth's enamel wears away. "This is an excellent way for us to share our expertise with the community," she said.

More than 250 patients were seen the first week.