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Study certifies Heidelberg, Stuttgart and Mannheim health care facilities among the best

By Jennifer Walsh

U.S. Army Medical Department Activity – Heidelberg Public Affairs Office

HEIDELBERG, Germany -- The U.S. Army Medical Department Activity – Heidelberg successfully completed its Joint Commission survey as an ambulatory care center Nov. 5 at Nachrichten Kaserne here.



The Joint Commission surveys approximately 15,000 health care organizations worldwide and grants accreditation to organizations that demonstrate a strong commitment to providing safe, high-quality health care and continually work to improve that care, according to the commission's Web site.

“We undergo a Joint Commission survey because we’re making a commitment to our patients,” said Jan Stupple, Heidelberg MEDDAC’s Joint Commission coordinator. Stupple said the survey lets patients know the facility maintains a high standard of care.

The commission’s surveyors spent three days inspecting the Heidelberg Health Center and outlying clinics in Mannheim and Stuttgart. During their inspection, they focused on nine key areas of health care, including the prevention of infections, medication management and building safety.

“The most important focus area was the national patient safety goals,” Stupple said. “Some of the goals include ensuring the patient gets the right medication and reducing the spread of infection through hand washing.”

To evaluate the Heidelberg MEDDAC’s policies and procedures, the surveyors immersed themselves in the day-to-day functions of the organization.

“They looked through staff education and training records, checked our policies and procedures and -- with patient permission -- evaluated our patient treatment process,” said Col. Kyle D. Campbell, the Heidelberg MEDDAC commander. “They conducted multiple patient tracers throughout the organization.”

During a tracer, a surveyor observes a patient moving through the varying stages of care. This includes monitoring the admission process, watching laboratory tests performed, checking patient records for accuracy, and interviewing the patient about the quality of care received.

“The process is very thorough ... They not only want to see the big picture, they want to see the inner workings of the MEDDAC at the point of service to our patients,” Campbell said.

Although the inspection included reviewing policies and procedures, one of its main focal points was on the staff and the delivery of safe, high-quality health care, Heidelberg MEDDAC officials said.

“The surveyors said our staff is well-educated and excelled throughout the survey process,” Campbell said.

Dee Murphy, one of the commission surveyors, said the Heidelberg MEDDAC rated among the top organizations she's examined. The survey granted full accreditation to the facility for up to 39 months; at that time another survey must be completed.

In the meantime, MEDDAC official say, the organization will continue to push forward.

“We're committed to continuous improvement,” Stupple said. “Our motto is: Always better.”



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