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Release No. 04-04-09

Date: May 4, 2004

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News Release

Student, faculty place first in poster competition

BETHESDA, Md. -- A graduate student and a faculty member at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences earned first place in a poster competition at the 44th Occupational Health and Preventive Medicine Workshop March 21.

Navy Lt. Douglas Parish, MSC, a graduate student in the environmental health sciences program in USU's Environmental and Occupational Health Division, and Navy Cmdr. Gary Hook, MSC, Ph.D., MPH, CIH, assistant professor and deputy director of the university's EOHD, took first place among ten other competitors in the poster competition's research category in Chesapeake, Va.

"I was very pleased to find out Lt. Parish's poster was given first place honors in the competition," said Hook, who helped Parish shape the direction and focus of the poster. "The quality of the posters submitted in the research category this year was exceptionally high, making the competition keen. However, I was not surprised with the outcome, as Lt. Parish has put tremendous effort into his research."

The poster displays information on portable sampling equipment and field methods used to take samples of soil and water for an indication of diisopropylamine, which is an intermediate chemical warfare agent precursor used in the production of VX nerve agent.

Parish explains that taking soil and water samples with field methods and portable sampling equipment can be especially important to the military because it can identify whether or not a facility in a foreign country is a CWA production plant or a legitimate industrial plant that's conducting standard operations.

“This [field methods and sampling equipment] provides our men and women in the field a definitive method for the detection and identification of a CWA precursor. There are a number of CWA detection methods published, but very few for precursors,” Parish added.

The OHPM workshop is a week-long, annual event sponsored by the Navy Environmental Health Center in Portsmouth, Va. This workshop, which normally takes place in either San Diego, Calif., or Norfolk, Va., provides up-to-date occupational health and preventive medicine training for hygiene officers, preventive medicine technicians, occupational health doctors and audiologists. The workshop also provides refresher training on previously learned information.

USU was established by Congress under the Department of Defense in 1972 and has the nation’s only fully accredited federal school of medicine and graduate school of nursing. It has provided the country with close to 3,500 military and public health physicians, as well as scientists and health care practitioners.