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# Evidence Based Principles to support Army Nurses returning to work after deployment



# Army Nurse Corps Officers' Reintegration Experiences after a Deployment to Operations Enduring Freedom or Iraqi Freedom

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# Purpose



- Background:
  - Strategic Issues Retention Group commissioned MAMC investigators to examine deployment related retention issues
  - Phase I involved nurses currently at MAMC
  - Phase II included focus groups from 3 other large MTFs
- Purpose:
  - To explore the effect of deployment related factors on ANC Officers' intent to stay or leave active service



# Sample: Demographics



- 9 Focus Groups
- Sample Size: 55
- Company Grade (n=18)
  - Mean Age = 33
- Field Grade (n=37)
  - Mean Age=44
- Rank:
  - LT - 13%
  - CPT- 33%
  - MAJ- 36%
  - LTC- 18%
- Deployment Length:
  - 80% >6 months (mode =12)
  - 15% > once



# Sample: Demographics



- Nursing Specialties Represented
  - 29% 66H
  - 29% 66H8A
  - 18% 66E
  - 9% 66F
  - 5% 66P
  - 4% 66G
  - 4% 66HM5
  - 2% 66H8D
- Work Environments Represented
  - 78% CSH
  - 9% BDE/DIV
  - 7% ASMC
  - 6% FST
- Locations
  - 70% Iraq
  - 26% Kuwait
  - 4% Afghanistan

# Methods



- Design: Descriptive Exploratory Study
- Methods: Consenting participants attended one of nine focus groups and provided input in response to structured questions.
- Analysis: Guided by Husserlian descriptive Phenomenology using Colaizzi's iterative steps

# Reintegration Themes



- **Recognize us and our families with a welcome home.**
- **Make an honest effort to give us assignments that move us forward in our career.**
- **Treat us like we are staying in the ANC**
- **Back home you make nursing work harder than it has to be.**
- **Evaluate post-deployment health, suggest Army OneSource, co-locate if possible**

# Recognize us and our families with a welcome home

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- Everyone needs to be welcomed home even if they are not assigned to a Unit at the arrival point. Follow the welcome with at least 30 days of negotiable leave.
  - “When we came back they didn’t do anything. It was just, when do you want to come back to work?”

**MAKE AN HONEST EFFORT TO GIVE US  
assignments that move us forward  
in our career**



- Negotiate job assignments. If unable to provide first choice, create a plan to move toward first choice.
  - “We were ready for new challenges. It was insulting to resume a preceptorship or return to a low speed area.”

# Treat us like we are staying in the ANC



- ANs have often not made up their minds about staying or leaving. Don't assume we are getting out
  - “When I came back they said they would assign me to this floor until I got out of the Army. I don't know where they got the idea that I was getting out.”

# Back home you make nursing work harder than it has to be



- Provide a mini-orientation as there have probably been administrative changes. Recognize that the speed and patient types are different and readjustment time will be needed.
  - “The staff here make everything bigger than it has to be. ‘You need to be quicker’, I’d think, he’s not really dying.”
  - “This job seems less important; there you have a sense of doing the ultimate job. You’re not worried about SOPs. You're doing what is important.”

**Evaluate post-deployment health,  
suggest Army OneSource,**



**co-locate if possible**



- ANs often slip through the post deployment health screening.
- Recognize that most people report the need for additional support at the 3-9 month point and would like someone to check in on them. If additional support is needed, they prefer an outside source or peers with the same experience.
- If possible, reintegration seems to be supported by working on units with other returning ANs.

# Principles to Guide Reintegration Strategy

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- Provide recognition and welcome back (for everyone).
- After that, approve 30 days leave unless the Officer requests something different.
- Evaluate post-deployment health (ongoing).
- Negotiate job assignment. If unable to provide first choice; create a plan to move toward first choice.
- Recognize that most people report the need for additional support at the 3-9 month point and that most people prefer an outside source or peers with the same experience.

# Principles to Guide Reintegration Strategy



- Understand that most people report a period of apathy and callousness that may be perceived as being less motivated and intending to leave the ANC; this usually resolves over time.
- Understand that even if returning to the same work unit, things have changed since they have been gone. They may need a mini-orientation.
- Provide time to re-in process as a group, perhaps ½ days during the week.



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**QUESTIONS??**