



# Civilian Healthcare Navigator Program

Interpreter Support Agreement with Zama General Hospital



COL Jeremy D. Johnson, MD

USARJ Surgeon

7 February 2024



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# Background



- For decades, the BG Sams clinic took care of DoD Civilians and Contractors without any restrictions and had 5 full-time providers
- Based on TRICARE beneficiary population, clinic decreased to 4 providers in 2021
- The loss of that 5<sup>th</sup> provider resulted in lower capacity at the clinic
- Commander of the clinic began to enforce the 2011 USD Health Affairs guidance that designates the priority of Civilians' access to care overseas
- Letter sent to patients explaining the situation and giving them a list of off-post providers with English-speaking capability
- International Health Clinics in downtown Tokyo have English-speaking providers, but require 3-4 hours of commuting from Camp Zama



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# Background



- Access to care concerns from DoD Civilians and their Dependents led to the search for solutions within the local community
- US Army Japan leadership has always made quality of life a priority, and quickly ensured efforts were focused on improving civilian healthcare
- US Army Japan Surgeon team worked with legal teams from Defense Health Agency (DHA) and US Army Japan to explore options
- Hiring an additional provider with Defense Health Program funding to provide care for our DoD Civilians and their dependents was not legally authorized
- We met Dr. Watari, CEO of Zama General Hospital, at the Zama City Disaster Drill and set up a visit to seek a solution to facilitate DoD Civilian care at his hospital



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# Background



- Dr. Watari agreed to support visits from our patients if US Army Japan provided language support during the appointing process and all parts of the patients' visits
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed on 7 July 2023 between the US Army Japan (USARJ) Chief of Staff and the Zama General Hospital CEO to implement the Civilian Healthcare Navigator program
  - DHA was not party to the agreement, as translators were USARJ employees
- This program is designed for DoD Civilians, Contractors, and their dependents who are not TRICARE eligible
- Program will be staffed with 5 Host Nation Interpreter/ Translators at full operating capability

# Implementation Timeline



- 2 October: started the program with two interpreters/translators
- November: up to three interpreters/translators
- February: fourth interpreter/translator started working
- Positions are host nation employees and the Government of Japan pays their salary
- Opened the program to Atsugi Navy base civilians in December
- In the first 4 months of the program, 217 patients have used the program



Ms. Akiyama



Ms. Fukada



Ms. Sugimoto



Ms. Osato

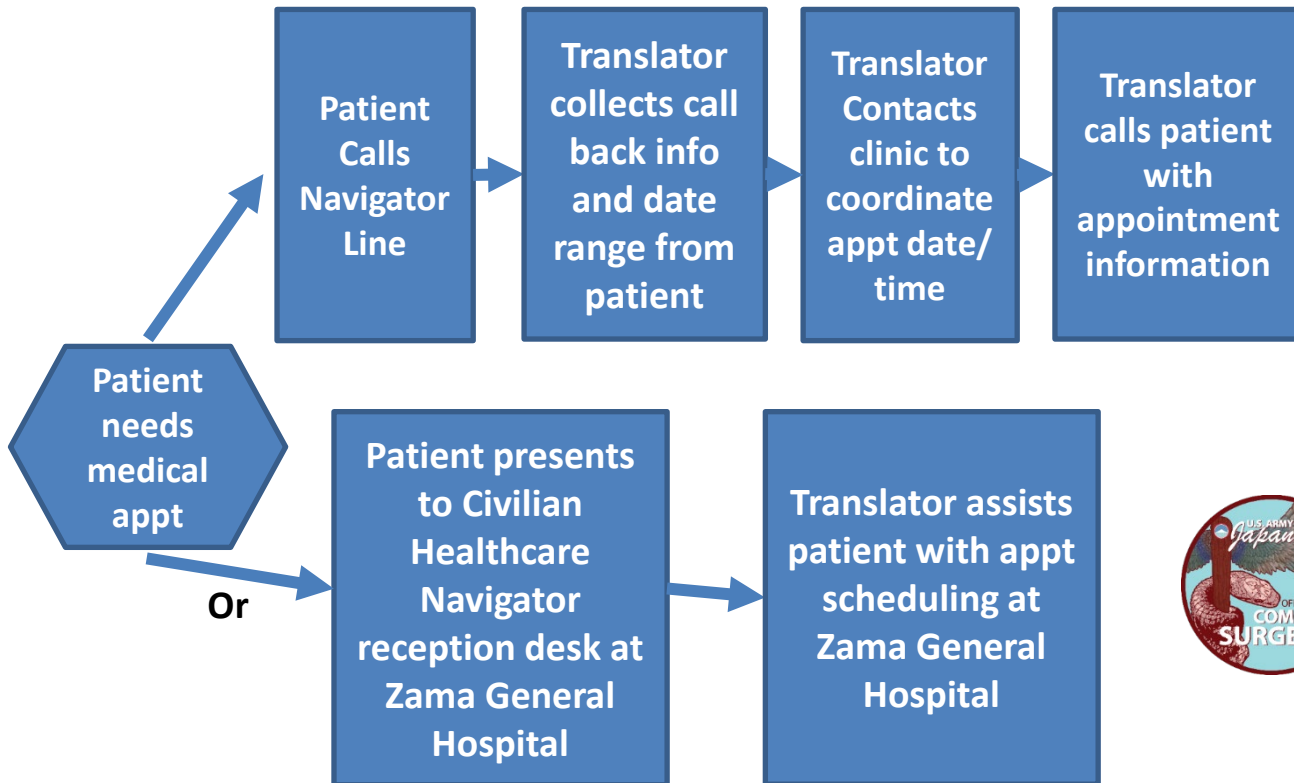
# Civilian Healthcare Navigator Team

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# Appointing Process





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# Day of the visit process



Patient presents to Civilian Healthcare Navigator reception desk at Zama General Hospital

Translator escorts patient through check-in process

Translator interprets for the patient and provider during appointment

Assistance during checkout/payment process

Assistance given for filing for insurance reimbursement





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# Services at Zama General Hospital



- Adult Primary Care
- Pediatrics
- Endocrinology (Diabetes specialists)
- Orthopedics
- Cardiology
- Neurology
- Rheumatology
- Joint Replacement
- General Surgery
- Gastroenterology
- Pulmonology
- Neurosurgery
- Dermatology
- Physical Therapy
- ENT
- Plastic Surgery
- Ophthalmology
- Urology
- Gynecology
- Pharmacy
- Lab
- Radiology (MRI/CT scan/X-ray)
- 4 Operating Rooms
- Inpatient ward for care as needed



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# Feedback From Our Patients



- “I can’t say enough good things about the efficiency & convenience of this program! **THANK YOU for listening to the community’s requests & providing this very much needed translation services.** I used CHCNP for the first time yesterday & the health care services I received from Zama General Hospital was **excellent** from start to end. My interpreter Sachiko-san was prompt, courteous & thoroughly explained everything which made for a smooth consult.”
- “I am currently a civilian serving at Camp Zama and the only options we have is to go to Zama General Hospital which can be quite daunting, but **thanks to your services you have made that experience less stressful, more informative, and overall, a WAY better experience than in the past.** Whosever’s ideas to put a translator dedicated to assisting base personnel is a genius and deserves a promotion. Not only that but the translators are hands down the best I have seen. **Friendly, professional, and made sure I had everything I needed.** I had the assistance of Nozomi and she was awesome. It is not fun feeling terrible and having to go to the hospital to seek help, but with her there it made the experience stress free. Thank you, Camp Zama. A+ for these services.”



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# Learning points



- This program is free to the civilian employees, contractors, and their families (as supported by our legal office since the Government of Japan pays the salary for the host nation employees)
- The MOU got the process started and bi-weekly meetings with the Hospital leadership have helped us make rapid improvements
- Zama General Hospital does not do yearly physicals or mammograms
  - Zama General Hospital has now approved offering annual physicals (based on US standards) in April 2024
  - We are working with another hospital (Ebina hospital) for mammogram support
  - The radiology departments at Yokosuka Naval Hospital and Yokota Air Force Hospital also see SOFA-status civilians/contractors for mammograms on a space-available basis



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# Summary



- The Civilian Healthcare Navigator Program supports DoD Civilian, Contractors, and their dependents who are not covered under TRICARE
- The four translators selected have excellent English and Japanese speaking skills and love to help people
- We will be making improvements daily to make this program truly fit the needs of our community
- Will require payment at the time of the visit. Translators assist the patients with filing for reimbursement
- This is a new venture, and we are getting inquiries from other military bases that are interested in starting similar programs