First Aid prepares Cadets to handle battlefield injuries

By Samantha Saldivar

The intrinsic nature of war necessitates the need for on the spot first response medical care to avoid unnecessary casualties and there simply aren’t enough military medical professionals to handle them all. To combat the overwhelming need for additional personnel to assist injured Soldiers during the heat of battle, the U.S. Army teaches all of it’s Soldiers basic combat life saving skills to adequately address the problem.

In order to ensure that the Army’s future commissioned officers are able to handle the task of basic life saving skills, Reserve Officers’ Training Corps Cadets are tasked with a course in first aid during the Leader Development and Assessment Course at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

Under the instruction of Cadre, the future officers assessed mock injuries and applied bandages. Others waited limp in the dirt before fellow squad members expertly rolled, secured and lifted them for carry out on their shoulders.

First aid training provides Cadets with the skills to assess, treat and transport the wounded while in the field. Cadets learned how to treat lacerations, burns, chest wounds, amputations and shock symptoms in both Cadre led classes and with hands-on instruction.

“What we teach them here is how to use their head and what’s in their first aid kit to treat the majority of injuries they may encounter,” said Scott Heise, a student at the University of Wisconsin La Crosse and LDAC senior medical trainer. “They leave more confident and actually willing to perform the skills instead of just rigidly testing them on it.”

Throughout the course, Cadets have the opportunity to ask Cadre questions and better prepare themselves for graded evaluations at the end.

“I take it very serious, it’s been very good training,” said Cadet James Cejka, 6th Regiment, Alpha Co., a criminal justice student at Norwich University from Brunswick, Maine. “They make it simple enough so you can understand the basics. I feel a lot more comfortable and if something happened in real life I think I would know the basics of what to do.”

Not every Cadet will go on to pursue a career as a medic, but every soldier is responsible for knowing proper health and safety procedures. While experience is crucial, knowing the fundamentals helps Cadets to feel confident in hectic situations.
“The most important thing about first aid is the knowledge of it,” said Cadet Danielle Zeitvogel, 6th Regiment, Bravo Co., of the University of North Dakota. “In combat, the first step is prevention and acting quickly, so you have to have knowledge. You take away a lot of valuable information because as leaders we need to make sure our soldiers know these things, but we do as well.”

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