

ABOVE AND BEYOND

OREF VOLUNTEERS TAKE THE LEAD IN SHARING STORIES FROM THE FRONTLINES

Thanks to a collaboration between **Cyrus Ghavam, M.D.** and **Capt. Dana Curtis Covey, M.D., MC, USN**, orthopaedic surgeons in northern Alabama had an opportunity to hear about the challenges of treating extreme trauma on the battlefield and the role that research plays in helping wounded warriors recover.

An article that Capt. Covey wrote,* published in the April 2009 issue of *The Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery*, led Dr. Ghavam to invite him to address a group of local orthopaedic surgeons at a dinner Dr. Ghavam was organizing in Huntsville, Ala. to bring attention to the value of supporting research and education through OREF.

On Dec. 9, 2009, Capt. Covey, chairman, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery Naval Medical Center, San Diego, shared with Dr. Ghavam and his colleagues some of his experience in the Iraq War practicing combat orthopaedics.

INSPIRATION AND INSIGHTS FOR TREATING MILITARY VETERANS

"Huntsville has a moderate military presence, and we all see and treat soldiers and Marines in our practices," Dr. Ghavam said. "But spending 7 months operating in a Forward Surgical Hospital in Iraq, with tents and concrete barriers as the edifice, U.S. Marines acting as a walking blood bank,

and the postoperative recovery room being a transport helicopter — well, that speaks to a different level of service."

"Military orthopaedic surgeons play a pivotal role in treating service members injured in the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan," Capt. Covey said, "because the majority of those wounded in action sustain musculoskeletal trauma."

"Capt. Covey speaks in a matter-of-fact way about his wartime experiences, which for the rest of us are unfathomable," Dr. Ghavam remarked.

THE NEED FOR ONGOING RESEARCH

Dr. Covey's presentation helped call attention to the fact that supporting OREF is an opportunity to contribute to the best possible care for military, veteran, and civilian patients.

"My view is that for those of us in practice who do not have the capacity, infrastructure, or inclination to perform research, OREF provides a means for us to support those who can," said Dr. Ghavam. "All of us in private practice benefit from the product of this work; it enables us to provide our patients with the best orthopaedic care in the world."

"Ongoing research and education will contribute to continued improvements and innovations that will further elevate the care given to our wounded warriors," Capt. Covey said.

* Covey DC. From the Frontlines to the Home Front. The Crucial Role of Military Orthopaedic Surgeons. *The Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery*, American edition, April 2009; 91: 998-1006.



▲ Capt. Dana Curtis Covey, M.D., MC, USN (second from R) and other members of a surgical team treating a wounded Marine in Fallujah in Iraq's Al Anbar province.



▲ Cyrus Ghavam, M.D. is an orthopaedic spine surgeon in private practice in Huntsville, Ala., a loyal Order of Merit donor to the OREF Annual Campaign, and OREF State Campaign volunteer.