

## ACPM Member Spotlight—Eric Deussing, MD, MPH, FACPM

Donna Grande, MGA, Chief Executive Officer, The American College of Preventive Medicine

When you meet physicians trained in Preventive Medicine there is something different that separates them from other physicians. I had the distinct honor of meeting the member for this Spotlight early in my tenure as CEO of the American College of Preventive Medicine. At that time, Dr. Deussing was serving as the sole representative from the Department of Defense to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). I was seeking a member with strong evaluation expertise, and he was recommended as someone to serve on the Advisory Committee of our study on the Value of Preventive Medicine. In that first phone conversation, we hit it off—his eloquent understanding of the science, his diplomacy and thoughtfulness as well as his passion for prevention and the specialty of preventive medicine was clear. He was the member I was seeking to serve in this important role. Since that time, I have followed his career and was honored to be invited to attend his retirement ceremony from a distinguished career in the U.S. Navy and to meet his beautiful family.

Every quarter, I submit a Member Spotlight that highlights Preventive Medicine physicians and their careers—how they found preventive medicine as a specialty and how the training enhanced their career. Previous spotlights have included Dr. Brenna Van-Frank of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Georgia, Dr. Leith States, of the U.S. DHHS Office of the Assistant Secretary of Health, Dr. Linda Hill from the University of California, San Diego, Dr. Michael Crupain of New York, Dr. Tista Ghosh of Colorado, Dr. Maria Mora Pinzon of Wisconsin, Dr. Ed Fess of Arizona, Dr. Chris Pernel of New Jersey, Dr. Lisa Waddell of South Carolina, Dr. Ankush Bansal of Florida, all engaged members of ACPM. This article focuses on one of the members who served in the Military and is based in the greater Washington, DC area.

Dr. Eric Deussing's career is truly remarkable—from his role as a physician serving in the U.S. Military at domestic locations and abroad to his new role as Public Health Emergency Officer of the U.S. Defense Health Agency. Learn more about Dr. Deussing below.



Eric Deussing, MD, MPH, FACPM

### How were you able to maximize your military service and become trained in preventive medicine?

Early in my military career I trained as a preventive medicine (PM) resident at the DoD's Uniformed Services University (USU) in Bethesda, MD. I am very grateful for the experiences I had there. Through this PM program I had the privilege of learning from a diverse student and faculty body comprised of both civilian and military medical professionals. During my two years at USU I was also able to experience a broad set of professional experiences such as, interning at the Institute of Medicine (now the National Academy of Medicine), working with the US Preventive Services Task Force, and even supporting the US Delegation to the World Health Assembly at the WHO in Geneva. All these

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experiences were made possible through the PM residency program at USU.

### **What attracted you to the specialty and who influenced you to consider this pathway in medicine?**

I started my military career as a Navy flight surgeon in an operationally deployed squadron; this initial position opened my eyes to the strategic role medicine and specifically prevention can have in an individual patient and at an organizational level. Hearing from other physicians who had also been flight surgeons and then went on to train in preventive medicine reinforced my decision to pursue a career in this specialty.

### **What is your favorite memory of your military service?**

Truly, I am blessed with many great memories from each position of my previous military career. A highlight was serving as the DoD's liaison to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). One of my favorite experiences was facilitating a meeting between two senior agency officials and seeing it result in a new global health security partnership which continues to bear fruit today. I didn't know the impact it would have at the time, but that is really the nature of PM. We often sow seeds that have a long germination.

### **What impact do you see from those trained in preventive medicine while serving in the military that may differ from civilian training?**

In many ways the impacts can be similarly dramatic through work such as disease surveillance and vaccination programs. Military preventive medicine provides opportunities to realize these impacts within unique settings (e.g. an aircraft carrier) and among a population which is both domestic and international. As a result, military PM physicians experience a fantastic diversity of challenges and impact throughout their careers.

I believe this results in a very high sense of satisfaction in the work.

### **What advice would you offer young physicians in the military who are beginning their journey in medicine?**

Pursue excellence with creativity and patience. Much like a master craftsman, your product is your reputation. Therefore, create systems, programs, policy, and products that reflect excellence. Think creatively and outside the box; often as PM docs we can see things differently. This is an advantage. Exercise creativity in what you do. However, temper this boldness with wisdom and a long view, in a word: patience. I learned early on in my training that PM uses a very long fulcrum. It can take much longer to actuate and manifest results, but those results are often at great scale and effect.

### **What is the most powerful advice you received that made a difference in your career decisions?**

Stay positive, always. A former boss gave me this advice, and even more importantly, he lived it out. I have seen the difference it's made in my work and those around me. Circumstances are often challenging, but staying positive as an individual and a leader can make a tremendous difference.

### **From your point of view, what is the key benefit that a professional association such as ACPM can offer an individual?**

Community. We all need a place to belong; it is human nature. A professional association such as ACPM provides preventive medicine physicians a community. It is a place to find connection, encouragement, mentorship, and professional growth. In particular, I love seeing colleagues at the annual ACPM conference. It's a professional highlight each year and always a lot of fun.