

## Outstepping Your Colleagues

By Jorge Gomez

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Liz Harrell is determined to outstep her rival who bears the same first name Lizzie Gutierrez. Since Irwin Army Community Hospital launched an internal Performance Triad challenge in October that happened only once.

“I ran three miles in the morning and walked up a hill during lunch. It felt good to beat Lizzie,” Harrell said. “And that’s probably the only way I can outstep her.”

Both Harrell and Gutierrez are staff nurses in the OB/GYN Clinic at Irwin Army Community Hospital. Their friendly competition grew into a movement within the clinic’s staff who wanted in on the excitement. By November the count had grown to 13 participants.

Although it was occasioned by an inner hospital program, what made the rivalry possible was the distribution of a wearable activity tracker. The device tracks the wearer’s activity, exercise, nutrition (when the wearer manually inputs the data) and sleep. Users can sync or upload their stats to an online site to let friends see how well they are doing at a given time.

“Our goal throughout this challenge has been to encourage our hospital staff to learn more about the Performance Triad and experience the positive effects from it,” said Lt. Col. Amanda Forristal, Deputy Commander for Surgical Services. “As medical personnel we often advise patients to be active, eat healthy and get more sleep. What better way is there to educate patients than by exemplifying?”

The Performance Triad is an Army Medicine campaign designed to improve readiness and resilience among Soldiers. But program has spread to civilian staff and families who value health and optimal performance. It focuses on three core principles: sleep, activity and nutrition. A hospital committee designated the months of October, November and December respectively for each core event. Depending on the month, classes were provided to educate staff on the intricacies of sleep, activity or nutrition.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the program had a slow start in gaining traction among staff but became more popular by mid November, said Forristal.



Staff from the OB/GYN clinic at Irwin Army Community Hospital can sometimes be seen taking walks around the hospital during lunch. As part of the Performance Triad challenge, they each strive to reach 10,000 steps per day.

“More people started asking questions about the events we had listed. They asked if we would offer makeup classes on sleep or if more wearable activity trackers would be available,” she said.

Based on the popularity of the program the committee launched a second edition starting in February. New events for each month have been such as drinking the right amount of water for seven days, eating a meal that one would typically skip, or maintaining consistent sleep and wake times.

This second edition will give clinicians like Harrell and Gutierrez another opportunity to compete for the greatest number of steps.

Harrell was already active before the hospital launched the Performance Triad initiative. But using a wearable device helped quantify her activity throughout the day. Syncing her steps online gave it a social component. An app allows Harrell and others to view each other steps, feeding a healthy competitiveness among staff with similar responsibilities in the same work environment.

It takes about 10,000 steps for the average person to log about five miles. At that point the device tingles to congratulate the wearer.

“It sounds like a lot but you can cover that distance in the course of an average day without even trying, especially if you have stairs like here in the hospital,” Gutierrez said. “Or a long hallway to walk up and down. Every little bit helps.”

Sometimes Gutierrez and Harrell corral the clinic staff during lunch to walk with them around the hospital building. It has the effect of getting those extra steps needed to reach one’s daily goal.

But in Gutierrez and Harrell’s world, getting from point A to point B has turned into a competition for who can lengthen the distance.

Harrell said it isn’t easy keeping up with Gutierrez who tends to achieve 7k steps before 9 a.m. But that’s a good thing.

“She keeps me on my toes,” Harrell said.