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Access to care at LRMC

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Landstuhl, Germany -- Incoming patients and summer rotations sometimes can make access to care at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center a bit trickier for military dependents and retirees to get. Care still is available, a person just needs to know how to go about getting it.

Many LRMC clinics are seeing predominately active duty personnel only. Each case is evaluated individually, so there are instances where dependents are seen, but access is limited.

The reasons for the current care status are because certain clinics are seeing more injured patients from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Also, LRMC has a significant number of health care providers deployed downrange. And just the fact that it's summer plays a small role in the decision.

"This frequently happens in the summer as we underlap," said Col. Steven A. Older, deputy commander for clinical services. "We just have a smaller number of resources now than during other times of the year. We compensate during these times by bringing in doctors from America to fill our needs." Examples of clinics where access may be extremely limited are orthopedics, dermatology and urology.

"This changes from week to week, depending on what type of injuries are coming in and the stress load placed on certain clinics."

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Beneficiaries who are not able to be seen by LRMC clinics will be referred to the Preferred Patient Network to seek care on the German economy. Quality of patient care in the civilian sector is monitored by U.S. military medical personnel.

Col. James Rundell, TRICARE Europe Executive Director, said that a military quality-monitoring program assures that patients will receive the best care possible from host nation health care providers. "Military medical treatment facility and TRICARE Europe officials gather information about providers in the network from patient surveys, consultation report reviews, and other feedback tools," he said. "That information is used to make the system better."

Patient liaisons also are available to answer questions and, if necessary, walk patients through the entire process.

Patient liaisons can answer an array of questions including information about the local hospital including translations, discharge instructions, what to expect with regard to food, procedures, visiting hours, cultural differences, length of stay and what personal items patients may need to take with them.

"Patients need not worry about seeking help on the economy," said Maj. Hoiden. "Our liaisons will make appointments for them if that's what they need. They even will escort our patients and help them fill out their Tri-Care claim forms to make sure their experience is as hassle-free as possible."