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[A Message from the Navy Surgeon General: Shipmate Going Ashore](#)

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By Vice Adm. Matthew L. Nathan, Navy surgeon general and chief, U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery



Shipmates and colleagues:

It seems hard to believe that four years have gone by since I wrote many of you when I became your surgeon general. As I prepare to leave, I am occasionally asked about any regrets over this tour. I answer

only one. I wish I could have met more of you and heard your stories and your path.

Meeting our Sailors and civilian shipmates and seeing what you do has always been my source of energy and inspiration to do my best on your behalf. I know this will be read by a spectrum of folks, some just starting out and feeling like a very small part of a big Navy, and some “old Salts” who have been there and then some. Working in health care is challenging today, yet the rewards of making differences in lives are priceless. From the providers to the supply and admin folks, you are all members of a team that states as its bottom line, “I will be there when you need me.” And in Navy Medicine that means anytime, anywhere... on, above, under the sea and on land with our Special Forces and Marine brothers and sisters. We will be there to catch the fallen Warrior, be it on land or sea. We will be there to comfort and care for the most important patient we will ever see...the next one through our door.

I have asked so much of all of you for so long, and you have always delivered. Our access and support to our patients has never been higher. We have reduced our costs and increased our value. We have positioned ourselves for a new paradigm of health care delivery in the 21st Century; all while maintaining ourselves as an agile and extremely capable cadre that deploys whenever, wherever, to meet the needs of casualty care and humanitarian relief and assistance. I now must ask one more thing from you, and that is to take the organization higher, even better, to best in class. Continue to make Navy Medicine an action verb vice just a noun. My expectation is you take Navy Medicine to unimagined heights.

Next week, the chief of naval operations will do the honor of officiating my retirement ceremony. It will be a time when I can thank my family and all of you for making this once young officer a part of your family. Whether you stay for three or thirty (I had planned to stay for three...life is what happens to you while you are making other plans), you will always be a part of our Navy and it will always be a part of you. I am always humbled when I meet and speak with our crews and witness their fierce dedication and determination, knowing at any time, they may be asked to stand up when called, and step forward when needed. During that ceremony, there will be tradition and memories. However, it will not be lost on us that while we speak our hospitals and clinics will be busy impacting lives; our Corpsmen at war, at sea, and with the Marines; our researchers and liaisons scattered all over the globe serving as amazing ambassadors of goodness and science; and our leaders – at every level – doing all they can to succeed in their mission while taking care of their people.

Ship, Shipmate, Self: Thank you for taking such good care of those who rely on you in their hour of need or joy. Thank you for taking care of each other and inserting yourself whenever necessary to make a difference. Please take care of yourself! Ask for help when needed. Asking for help does not mean you are failing, it means you are not alone...I guarantee it. I will always ask for yours when needed. And finally, never, ever, forget the difference you make in so many lives.

Surgeon general sends

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