



RAMSTEIN HAWC

Plays Major Role in New Air Force FITNESS CULTURE

The Health and Wellness Center (HAWC) at Ramstein AB, Germany, is a vital part of the Kaiserslautern Military Community's (KMC) comprehensive approach to fitness and wellness. From airmen and their families to civilians and other Department of Defense (DoD) employees, the HAWC provides a wealth of fitness, health and wellness programs, classes and activities, many in conjunction with KMC fitness facilities. In addition to supporting the Air Force's new fitness test, which officially begins on July 1, 2010, the HAWC is also a driving force behind the Air Force's Total Fit program — an effort to increase fitness levels, decrease injury rates, and better prepare airmen to fight, according to Maj. Lisa Tauai, USAF, health promotion flight commander, Ramstein AB HAWC.

“Ultimately, this Total Fit initiative will change the physical training culture in the Air Force,” says Tauai. “Total Fit revolves around exercises involving function or everyday movements with the goal of strengthening the core of the body, maximizing physical performance and reducing overuse injuries often experienced during traditional unit physical training sessions.”

“The routines of just running, push-ups, sit-ups and machine-based, one-dimensional movements have not improved the overall fitness of our Air Force but have unfortunately contributed to increased injuries,” adds Lt. Col. Chu Soh, USAF, physical therapy flight commander, who points out that the aim of the

Maj. Brett Bishop, USAF, 435th Medical Operations Squadron physical therapist, measures the leg of Col. Earl Matthews, USAF, 435th Air Base Wing commander. The Functional Movement Screening program provides analysis of strength and coordination deficiency to predict injury risk for airmen.

HAWC PHOTOS BY AIRMAN 1ST CLASS AMBER BRESSLER

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Airmen train at the Southside Fitness Center (adjacent to the HAWC), as part of the Air Force's Total Fit program, which is based on a functional approach to fitness.

Total Fit program is to teach airmen a more functional approach to fitness and wellness that will decrease injuries and improve readiness.

“This is a dramatic paradigm shift in the training philosophy with a vision to train new unit Physical Training Leaders (PTLs) with the skills and knowledge to lead and deploy these types of programs in the future,” notes Soh.

In addition to Maj. Tauai and Lt. Col. Soh, the Ramstein Total Fit team includes Maj. Brett Bishop, USAF, Ramstein Physical Therapy; Coach Tim Cline (former Southside fitness director); and Brian Kirby, Ramstein Fitness Program Manager/Exercise Physiologist.

SUPPORT FACILITIES

The HAWC houses two large classrooms, a large lobby, a large assessment room that has two Life Fitness 97Ti treadmills for gait analysis assessments and a relaxation room with a Aqua PT-Pro aqua massage bed from

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The HAWC's assessment room has an area where PTLs can conduct the push-up, crunches and abdominal circumference portions of the official physical fitness assessment. In addition, the HAWC has scales and height measuring devices that can be used for official physical fitness assessments. The HAWC also has a cycle ergometry bike — the Monarch 828 E with the MicroFit Robobike 828 hood attached — which is used for the aerobic component of the official physical fitness assessment when members cannot physically perform the 1.5-mile run.

Adjacent to the HAWC is the Southside Fitness Center, which has a large weight room, basketball court, racquetball courts and locker rooms downstairs. The upstairs has a large cardiovascular workout area, aerobics room and spin class room. Fitness equipment at Southside includes Life Fitness treadmills, elliptical trainers, lifecycles and free-weight stations; Precor AMTs and elliptical trainers; Concept2 rowers; and LeMond indoor cycles.

In total, there are four fitness facilities in the KMC supporting more than 54,000 military members, families and retirees. The facilities feature state-of-the-art fitness equipment from Life Fitness, Hammer Strength, Precor, Body Masters and Iron Grip. The fitness centers also use MicroFit for body analysis and health assessments for active duty and dependents age 16 and over. Cooper's fitness techniques for training and assessments are also used, as well as a unique video Gait Analysis assessment system. FitLinxx, which connects to the fitness equipment, provides individual fitness tracking, as well

as senior level oversight, as fitness activity is logged online and can be accessed by commanders or unit and group leaders.

TOTAL FITNESS

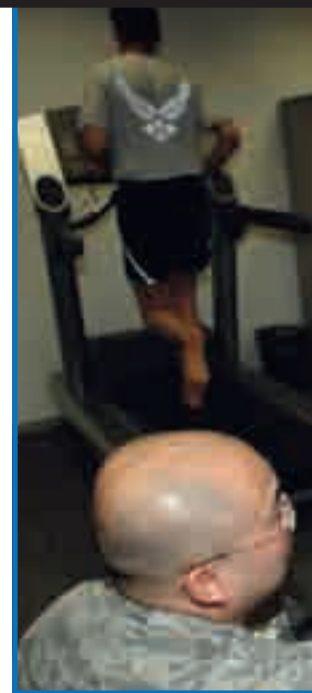
Since the Air Force Total Fit program was piloted at the Ramstein HAWC in 2008, the program has evolved and taken on much bigger presence, providing a new direction in training.

"The focus of the pilot test is to evaluate what sister services have determined to be beneficial — functional physical fitness training with an emphasis on balance, flexibility, core stability, speed, agility and power," Tauai explains. "The significance of this issue is exemplified by a recent study conducted by the Army, which found that physical training was the no. 1 cause for decreased war-fighting readiness of the force," she adds.

She points out that the Air Force has had similar findings, and over the past couple of years has also seen an increase in injuries due to mandatory physical training.

This new Total Fit program addresses this problem by taking a "functional" fitness approach to training airmen.

According to Tauai, since the Total Fit pilot test, the



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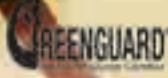


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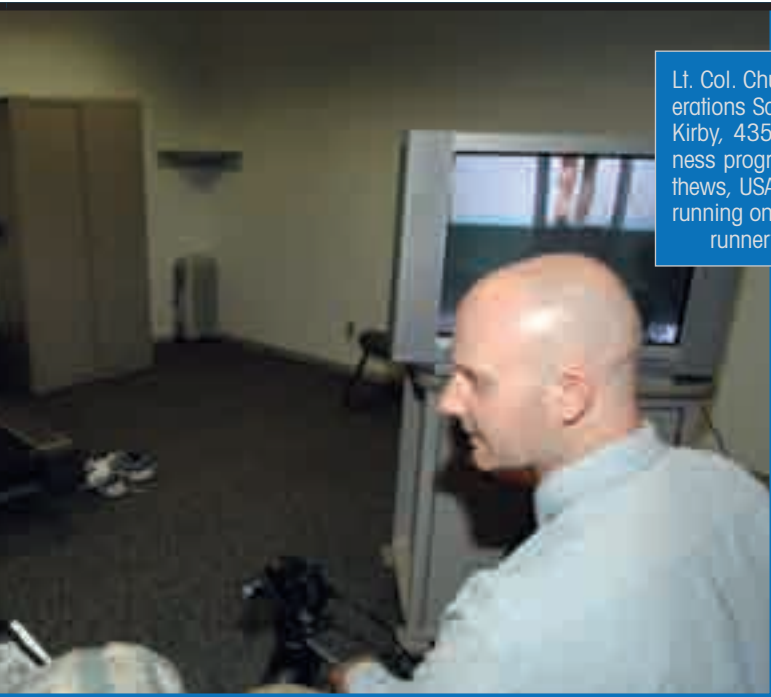


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Lt. Col. Chu Soh (left), USAF, 435th Medical Operations Squadron physical therapist, and Brian Kirby, 435th Aerospace Medicine Squadron fitness program manager, observe Col. Earl Matthews, USAF, 435th Air Base Wing commander, running on the treadmill, providing analysis of a runner's gait and proper shoe selection.

training emphasis is to empower PTLs to implement a safe, functional exercise program designed to increase military readiness, while decreasing common overuse injuries. The training is highly

recommended for all unit PTLs.”

Tauai notes that the HAWC receives excellent support from unit, group and wing leadership, and was awarded \$77,000 to purchase outdoor Total Fit equipment and Total Fit equipment bags, which can be loaned out to PTLs at the area fitness centers for group physical training sessions. Total Fit bags include numerous functional fitness items, such as versa-tubes, hurdles, cones, agility ladders, jump ropes and power steppers, which were purchased through Power Systems and MF Athletic/Perform Better.

One of the Total Fit goals is to ensure that each of the units has the correct number of PTLs trained to conduct Total Fit exercises at the unit level. Another goal is to eventually ensure that each of the units has at least one Total Fit equipment bag to use for group physical training sessions. The final goal is to partner with the area fitness center staff to further hone the program for the KMC.

“One primary lesson learned is that for Total Fit to succeed in the long term, a fitness culture change must occur from the top down to the airmen level,” notes Tauai. “Since Total Fit is a relatively new concept to the Air Force, continued buy in

Ramstein Physical Therapy/HAWC has trained 353 PTLs on the Total Fit concept.

“The monthly training involves an in-depth, comprehensive five-session program that educates future PTLs on the fundamentals and functional progression of exercises and programming for unit physical fitness,” she points out. “The

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and word-of-mouth testimonies to its effectiveness are important now and in the future.”

The Air Force has already begun to integrate this training into the Air Force Fitness Culture. For example, the PTL course been revamped and the Total Fit concepts have begun to be implemented U.S. Air Forces in Europe (USAFE)-wide.

“The PTL course has been revamped to include Total Fit as a fundamental piece,” notes Tauai. “Our Group PTL course is taught by our physical therapists, is a five-session training course, and fully introduces our PTLs to the Total Fit concept, which is starting to spread throughout USAFE. We have had several USAFE bases contact us for more information and have even traveled to places like Moron, Spain, to train their PTLs on Total Fit.”

PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

The Ramstein HAWC is founded on the principles of health promotion and preventive medicine. Tauai points out that “preventive health” is the key in combating chronic diseases that can often be dodged through good nutrition and a sound physical fitness regimen.

“The HAWC’s goal is to ultimately improve the KMC environment to make it more conducive to health and wellness,” she points out. “In an effort to reach this goal, we developed a KMC Healthy Environment Assessment that was sent electronically to all Ramstein personnel on Feb. 10. The responses from the assessment will provide the HAWC staff with leverage to further improve the KMC environment.”

In addition, the HAWC leads five Air Force health observances throughout the year — Healthy Weight Month in January, Nutrition Month in March, Fitness Month in May, Quit Tobacco Use Month in November and Responsible Alcohol Use Month in December — all of which involve many outreach activities that help keep the importance of nutrition, fitness and health/wellness at the forefront.

The HAWC also conducts MicroFit fitness assessments and functional movement screenings, performs gait analysis assessments upon request and quality assurance checks on units’ official physical fitness testing and unit PT programs. The gait analysis program is available for family members upon request. These programs provide members the tools required to achieve a higher level of fitness, while preventing overuse and overtraining injuries.

Throughout the military there has been a big push toward what the Army calls “comprehensive fitness,” which looks at preparing servicemembers mentally in addition to physically.

“Physical fitness is only one component of overall wellness,” says Tauai. “Mental fitness is also critical. With the high-ops tempo and deployment rates that take a toll on stress levels, the HAWC and Mental Health have teamed up to provide a new and improved KMC Stress Management Program. The program kicked off on March 10 and involves three multidisciplinary classes. One of the three classes revolves around stress reduction through humor.”

To support this program, the HAWC is completely renovating its relaxation room to include new massage chairs, an aqua massage bed, a water fountain and other relaxation items, and will fully begin marketing its new aqua massage bed as part of the revamped program.

“Stress reduction is certainly critical to overall mental health,” says Tauai. “Through the new and improved KMC

Stress Management Program, members will learn how to best cope with stress and be able to utilize the many relaxation tools at their disposal at the HAWC.”

WORKING TOGETHER

Ramstein accomplishes all of this because of the synergistic relationship between the HAWC and Fitness on base, who work together to prepare airmen physically and mentally.

The HAWC is currently working closely with fitness leaders and Wing leadership to support the new fitness program, which will be fully implemented by July 1, 2010, although starting in January of this year, airmen are required to take an official physical fitness test twice a year (under the old fitness program score charts).

“One of the HAWC’s primary roles includes ensuring that the updated education and intervention programs are ready by July 1, 2010, for members failing to meet physical fitness standards,” notes Tauai. “In addition, the HAWC will be responsible for training the new Fitness Assessment Cell (FAC) that is composed of civilian personnel and who will be responsible for testing all active-duty members starting on July 1, 2010.”

She points out that the HAWC is also working closely with the 86th Services Squadron and USAFE/A1 to maximize the effectiveness of the transition into the new program.

“The HAWC will continue to train Unit Fitness Program Managers (UFPMs) through June 30, 2010,” she notes. “However, the role of the UFPM is changing dramatically with the new Fitness Program. Most of the administrative workload is transitioning to the FAC. After July 1, the FAC will train and maintain the working relationship with the UFPMs.”

The HAWC also has a strong partnership with the Ramstein Physical Therapy clinic and the 86th Services Squadron to improve the physical fitness levels of airmen while preventing overuse injury rates.

“This partnership was strengthened with the kick-off of Total Fit in the fall of 2008 and has continued with a common goal of physically preparing our airmen for the physical rigors of deployment, while also striving to further improve the KMC environment for the health/wellness of our military members and their families,” Tauai explains.

The HAWC also recently partnered with the Youth Centers to revamp the KMC Childhood Overweight Program. “The curriculum is currently

being developed through a multidisciplinary team of health/wellness experts with hopes of kicking off the new, 12-week program in the March 10 time frame,” says Tauai.

The importance of nutrition and healthy eating habits in the overall fitness approach at the HAWC cannot be overlooked because good nutrition “is essential to overall health and wellness,” notes Tauai. “Without good nutrition, a member can never ultimately meet their overall physical fitness goals. A member’s overall diet fuels their body to maximize performance both on/off duty.”

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