

# On the front lines of surgery at home and abroad

Gregory Hill, D.O. ('86)

by Aaron Krumheuer

Gregory Hill, D.O. ('86), president of the OU-HCOM Society of Alumni and Friends Board of Directors, will provide the opening remarks for Saturday morning's program honoring veterans' and their families at the 2013 Ohio Osteopathic Symposium.

These programs are held in support of the White House Joining Forces Initiative, a project led by Michelle Obama to call attention to the education, employment and wellness of U.S. veterans. The special health needs of those who have served are subjects Dr. Hill knows firsthand.

A native of Akron, Ohio, Dr. Hill joined the U.S. Army in March 1983 while a student at OU-HCOM. He was deployed for two tours of duty during Operation Iraqi Freedom: from November 2003 to March 2004 in Baghdad with the 28th and the 31st Combat Support Hospitals, where he functioned as an orthopedic trauma surgeon, and in Anbar province, from August to December 2005, where he served as battalion surgeon for a forward operating base.



Gregory Hill, D.O. ('86), is an orthopedic surgeon at Summa Western Reserve Hospital in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. He was deployed twice to Iraq as an orthopedic trauma surgeon.

Dr. Hill is now a retired Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army and the Ohio Army National Guard.

"It's probably made me more confident as a physician overall, in that I don't get too worried about much from a clinical standpoint here in the states," he said. "I've seen a lot of bad injuries."

It was a learning experience, he said, in which he had to face the constant stress of being in harm's way. Amidst live ammunition, explosions and a constant barrage of injured soldiers, Dr. Hill and his team had to make use of the limited medical resources available in Baghdad and the Anbar Province to treat out-of-the-ordinary physical trauma.

He was also witness to the intense psychological and social pressures that exist in a war zone, compounded by the stress of being thousands of miles away from family and friends.

Many soldiers face a tough time as they reintegrate into their homes and communities after being deployed. The Invisible Wounds of

War Study by the RAND Corporation found that close to 20 percent of veterans returning from the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were affected by post-traumatic stress disorder or depression, and about the same number reported suffering from traumatic brain injury.

Dr. Hill cited his faith as one of the main strengths that sustained him through his tours of duty.

"We had a chapel that was a part of our unit there. That was a part of the group, so I would meet pretty regularly with my chaplain. We'd have coffee and talk about being deployed, about family and food, in the midst of combat. That was very valuable," Dr. Hill said.

He was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Certificate of Appreciation and the Global War on Terrorism Medal.

Dr. Hill is an orthopedic surgeon at Summa Western Reserve Hospital in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. He is also the

orthopedic surgery residency program director at the hospital, where he orchestrates rotations, teaches, and supervises residents and interns.

"I love that I can stay engaged with the college and things that are going on in Athens," he said.

Dr. Hill was the second minority student to graduate from OU-HCOM, and he remains involved in minority health affairs to this day. He is president of the National Osteopathic Medical Association (NOMA), which advocates for diversity in the osteopathic profession. Former OU-HCOM Dean Barbara Ross Lee, D.O., was the first president of NOMA, as well as the first African American female dean of any medical school. Dr. Hill works to encourage NOMA membership and participation on campus with medical students. In addition, he is a father of four, grandfather of five and the husband of Judi Hill, a proud supporter of his work at the college.

The session at the symposium addressing veterans' health was developed by OU-HCOM's Area Health Education Center as part of a nationwide effort to mobilize their networks to educate civilian health professionals about deployment-related health issues.



Surgical resident **Maria Crespo, D.O.**, (left) confers with Dr. Hill.

