

NASA undersea mission planned for May

February 27 2007

NASA said it will send two physicians and two astronauts into the ocean off Florida to test space medicine concepts and moon-walking techniques.

Veteran space flyer Heidemarie Stefanyshyn-Piper will lead the May 7-18 undersea mission aboard the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Aquarius Underwater Laboratory.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration flight surgeon Josef Schmid, NASA astronaut Jose Hernandez and Dr. Tim Broderick of the University of Cincinnati will complete the crew.

During the mission, the crew will conduct a variety of advanced medical technology experiments, including robotic telesurgery on simulated patients.

The telesurgery experiments are designed to help surgeons overcome interplanetary communication lag time and improve the care of astronauts on missions to the moon and Mars.

The crew will conduct simulated undersea "moon walks" to test concepts for future lunar exploration. During the simulated moon walks, they will construct an undersea structure with the help of a remotely operated vehicle, similar to what travelers to the moon might do.

The crew also will practice collecting geological samples to help develop tools and techniques for collecting lunar samples, as well as train future

lunar explorers to be geologists.

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