

# In combat zone, gastroenterologists put skills to test

October 26 2009

---

Most of today's gastroenterologists practice in relatively calm environments with patients of the same species. But for Dr. Leon Kundrotas and his colleagues working in Joint Base Balad, Iraq, the need to diagnose and treat military personnel sometimes required putting their human skills to the test to care for canine heroes.

In a poster being presented at the American College of Gastroenterology's 74th Annual Scientific Meeting in San Diego, Dr. Kundrotas examines how gastroenterologists on deployment put their endoscopic skills to work to treat military dogs that provide vital protective roles in security and munitions detection.

Working with on-site veterinarians, Dr. Kundrotas and his team performed endoscopies on a number of military working dogs who were experiencing signs and symptoms of gastrointestinal complications or disease. While some diagnostic procedures turned up swallowed objects like tacks and rocks that were eventually removed, others revealed more complex and serious problems like an obstructing [carcinoma](#) in the proximal colon of one dog who, sadly, died during deployment.

"On deployment, we do many diagnostic procedures on coalition troops, contractors, detainees and Iraqis," explains Dr. Kundrotas. "At times our familiarity with human anatomy and physiology has to be applied for the diagnosis and treatment of other mammals. We all have great admiration for military working dogs. One of the dogs we treated had uncovered a cache of weapons only days before. Ours was a unique situation that

contributed in a small way to the bottom line of the mission by getting these dogs well and back on their feet again."

Military working dogs are highly trained professionals who are designated a rank one level higher than their handlers. Each military working dog is named after a fallen hero.

"As gastroenterologists, we are sometimes confronted with challenging anatomies. Our experience takes that to another level," said Dr. Kundrotas. "For many of us, working with dogs was a break from working with the severely injured on a daily basis. While working dogs are by no means pets, when we did a procedure on a dog the whole staff was concerned and generally involved because of the affinity we feel with these wonderful animals and the memories of our own dogs back home."

Source: American College of Gastroenterology

Citation: In combat zone, gastroenterologists put skills to test (2009, October 26) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-10-combat-zone-gastroenterologists-skills.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.