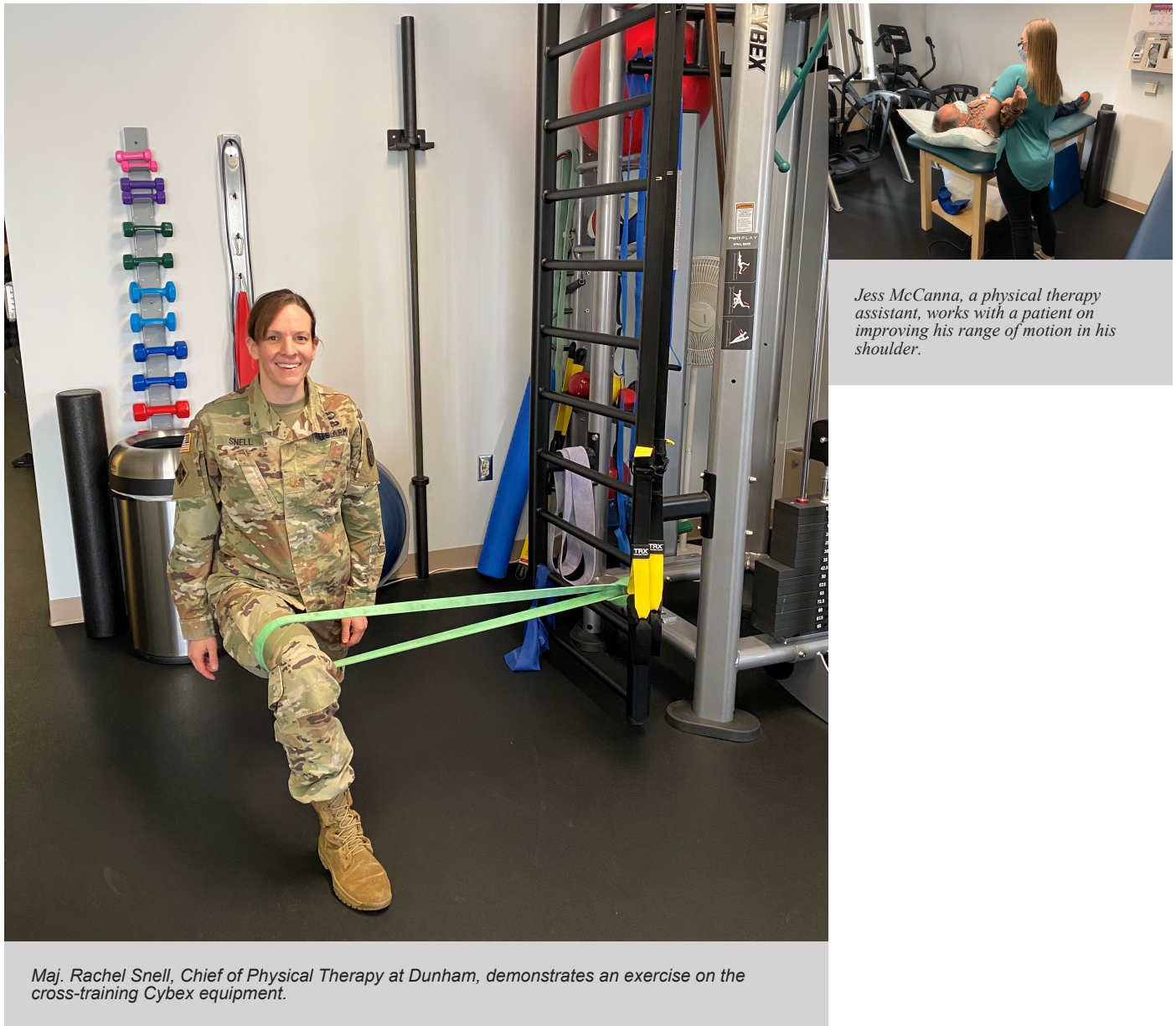


Dunham's innovative physical therapy clinic continues to provide care during COVID

By Elena Patton, Public Affairs Office 03 April 2021



Jess McCanna, a physical therapy assistant, works with a patient on improving his range of motion in his shoulder.

Maj. Rachel Snell, Chief of Physical Therapy at Dunham, demonstrates an exercise on the cross-training Cybex equipment.

The physical therapy program at Dunham Army Health Clinic is as unique as its population. The program is led by the Chief of Physical Therapy who is both patient-focused and innovative.

Major Rachel Snell has continued to provide personalized physical therapy care to USAWC students and other beneficiaries, maintaining the relationship between the Dunham's PT program and its patient population throughout the COVID pandemic.

The unique USAWC population includes colonels who have an average of 20 years of experience in their respective military fields. As a result of focusing on their careers, they have over-worked and neglected their bodies, said Snell, a graduate of the Army-Baylor Doctoral Program in Physical Therapy. "I work with them one-on-one to make sure that they have a plan and see results so that when they graduate from the war college, they are ready to dive into whatever job is next," said Snell.

Many of the clinic's PT patients have injuries and chronic problems centered on muscular-skeletal issues. This is a result of the push through the pain culture, ignoring aches and pains, and the natural aging process, said Snell.

Upon leaving the war college, students will go into assignments with more responsibility, additional stressors, and less time focus on themselves. "We need senior leaders to be in good health in their high-level jobs," said Snell.

"I am a soldier, and I want to help other soldiers," said Snell. "When I understand what my patients do, I feel that I can provide them with better care."

Here, Snell works with a smaller population than in her previous assignment at Fort Riley as the Senior Physical Therapist. "It gives me more time to really work through the multiple issues that the students often have and give them very customized treatment," said Snell.

Snell and her team, through a variety of methods, work to create treatment that aligns with a patient's goals. Through manual therapy, individual mobility and agility training, Snell's team works to improve a patient's range of motion. Trigger point dry needling uses an acupuncture needle to target specific muscular-skeletal areas to treat pain and dysfunction. Kinesiology taping provides support to and corrects the positioning of muscles and joints, and spinal adjustments decrease pain, said Snell.

The 2019 renovations to the Dunham PT clinic were designed to create more space and incorporate updated equipment. These renovations are now relevant for maintaining PT support in a COVID environment, allowing for social distancing. The increased square footage allows for more room

for patients to work on arms, the new equipment allows physical therapists to rehabilitate a soldier's injury while preparing him/her for the ACFT, and the rubberized floor allows patients to complete impact exercises without the consequences of that impact, said Snell.

The PT clinic is available to all referred beneficiaries, war college students, active-duty soldiers, family members, and other TRICARE beneficiaries.

"I work on making myself available to war college students," said Snell, referring to new student-in processing and the Senior Leader Sustainment program, offered to all USAWC students.

Students often find their way to the PT clinic through SLS, an Army program staffed by medical professionals. SLS is a set of assessments—sleep, nutrition, physical agility, and mental health—that result in a personal snapshot of one's health and wellness. The feedback can include recommendations for medical interventions, diet modifications, exercise changes, and physical therapy.