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Alumni profiles - Tom Herod

MBChB 2006

Surgeon Lieutenant Royal Navy
DARING career for medicine alumnus

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Alumnus Tom Herod has become the first Medical Officer for the Navy’s HMS DARING, one of the most advanced and powerful surface warships in the world.

‘Joining the Navy was something I always wanted to do,’ says Tom. ‘It‘s a great opportunity to do something different and challenging. Medicine represents one of the greatest passports in life and few professions allow you to travel so widely.’

As the only doctor on board the 191-strong crew ship, a lot of responsibility falls on Tom’s shoulders. Not only is he in charge of ensuring all crew are fit and healthy for work, he must also be on hand to respond to other ships in the vicinity if they need medical assistance.

Unlike regular areas of medicine, Tom’s role requires him to understand more unusual medical fields. Areas include nuclear, diving, aviation, chemical and biological warfare medicine as well as dentistry and managing patients in difficult environments such as in the back of a Lynx helicopter or on board in the sickbay during heavy seas. He also needs to operate as any other naval officer and have an understanding of how the ship works and what each department’s jobs involve in order to treat people effectively.

Tom was the Medical Officer of HMS CUMBERLAND, a Type 22 frigate, during Operation CALASH last year. CUMBERLAND spent several months patrolling in the Indian Ocean and off the coast of Somalia on anti-piracy operations.

He says: ‘When you’re in an isolated or dangerous area, you can’t just steam inland to get extra medical help. At base there is a team of medics you call on, but when you’re deployed, the only real medical support is at the end of a satellite phone, which is a challenge. Whenever we dock I take the opportunity to visit the local hospital as you never know when you’re going to need to use their equipment or assistance at short notice.’

Asked what the future holds, Tom says he hopes to stay with the Navy long-term. Next on the list is a training exercise in the US and possible deployment to Afghanistan.

Learn more about the new T45 destroyers and HMS Daring’s progress by visiting www.royalnavy.mod.uk and searching for DARING.

*HMS DARING was granted Freedom of the City of Birmingham in September 2009

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