



THE POWER OF REFLECTION

Fueling Development, Growth, and Mentorship in Army Medicine

By: SGM Jan Krieg

ABSTRACT

A new Chief Medical NCO reflects on the importance of leadership summits to shaping the future of Army Medicine. The description includes the shifting of perspectives from tactical to strategic, emphasizing the importance of teamwork, collective contribution, and leveraging resources across the Total Army. The author concludes that the summit reinforced the idea that success in Army Medicine relies on the collective efforts of all members, continuous learning, and taking action to drive change and improve the organization.

As a newly minted 68Z, the invitation to attend the FY 2025 68Z Summit was an experience that brought with it both excitement and a bit of panic. The excitement stemmed from the thought of what I anticipated—a gathering that would feel like a family reunion, complete with BBQ, Tex-Mex, and VFW-style storytelling. I imagined moments of reminiscing about the good old days of Army medicine and hearing tales about where we could improve in the year ahead. However, the summit turned out to be much more than a casual get-together. It became a forge, blending old and new elements of Army Medicine to create a more resilient and capable force.

This gathering was not merely about passing the time with stories and good food. Every interaction felt meaningful, transforming moment into commitments where we shared our strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations. What struck me most was the profound realization that as a member of Army Medicine, I am part of something much larger than myself—a network of professionals who, together, shape the future of our service.

Shifting Perspective: A Holistic View of Army Medicine

The summit shifted my perspective from a purely tactical focus on my immediate command to a broader strategic view of Army Medicine. Prior to attending, my view leaned more down and in, believing that the daily grind at the

tactical level—focused on my immediate command and responsibilities—was the most important aspect of our work. I focused my attention more on what was happening within my command thinking every effort needed to be concentrated there, more than the entire Army Medicine enterprise. Engaging with experienced minds, I understood the importance of my daily tasks within the larger mission. My role extends beyond my unit, influencing the broader Army Medicine puzzle through local and larger initiatives.

This insight did not diminish the importance of my local responsibilities. On the contrary, I realized that individual efforts fill critical gaps and collective success relies on everyone's contributions. It is unfair to expect others to fill that gap when the success of the team depends on each person's collective effort. The summit taught me that success is not about one person's contributions; it is about the sum of all parts working in unison.

The Value of Teamwork and Collective Contribution

In any high-performing team, some individuals naturally rise to the occasion when challenges arise—those looked to for guidance and those who motivate others to push forward when the going gets tough. However, while teams are made up of individuals, no one person can claim total success or failure. The collective effort of every member is what drives the team forward.



. More than 170 chief medical noncommissioned officers, 68Z, attended the Army Medicine Sergeants Major summit held on JBSA-Fort Sam Houston, Texas, from January 16-19, 2024.

Reflecting on this, I realized my role in Army Medicine extends beyond my immediate unit or command. It is about how I can contribute to the greater whole, using the insights and capabilities shared by my peers to influence my piece of the Army medicine puzzle. Whether through local changes or larger Army-wide initiatives, I now see how my actions can have a ripple effect across the force. The summit reinforced the idea that there is enough work to go around, but it takes everyone's contributions to ensure success and keep momentum going.

Leveraging Resources Across the Total Army

One of the most eye-opening lessons from the summit was the wealth of capabilities and resources available across the Total Army. As an organization, we are constantly searching for ways to optimize training, improve realism, and ensure our forces are prepared for whatever comes their way. Access to resources across the Army is truly astounding. Through careful planning and coordination, almost anything seems possible. The summit emphasized the importance of tapping into these resources and leveraging them to enhance our capabilities, especially when we can with other Army components to achieve shared goals.

Moving from Inspiration to Action: Building Future Success

Finally, one key takeaway from the summit was the idea that while ideas and inspiration are abundant, action turns those ideas into tangible results. The summit itself was incredibly valuable, but it could be even more impactful with concrete action items and follow-up plans. Leaving with due-outs, expectations, and future commitments would ensure that the inspiration gained from these discussions doesn't dissipate into nothing. A simple next step—whether

it's scheduling a follow-up meeting or setting a clear deadline for action—could create a sense of ownership and responsibility among 68Zs, helping us to continue the momentum we've built during the summit.

Shaping future leaders: The Value of Reflection

Shaping future leaders is an obligation all NCOs have, regardless of rank or level. This extends to the SGM/CSM at every level. During the 68Z summit, there were multiple echelons of SGMs and CSMs from battalion operations SGMs through three-star general officer nominative and everything in between. As a newly minted 68Z, I aimed to learn as much from everyone as possible through dialogue and questions. This approach provided me a healthy dose of daily self-reflection content. Taking time at the end of each day to sit in relative quietness allowed me to think back on my day and what I had encountered. This is the value of reflection on leadership. Processing what I learned from others and internally applying it to become better, and helping others become better, is invaluable. Reflecting in a quiet setting each day helped me move valuable lessons and information into my mental rucksack for future use. Some of this is deliberate, but some of the learning is just being self-aware and humble. Regardless of rank, there's no way to know everything, and even on topics I did know, I'm not an expert. Letting others school me on topics pours more into the knowledge bucket for later use.

Sitting on my couch, thinking, and searching for information that was unclear, or I had more questions about, gave me the ability to learn new things that benefit me and provides clarity to discuss things with others. Learning is constant when we reflect on the days and weeks and everything that presents itself. This learning through reflection creates a comprehensive understanding of problems, gaps, and opportunities, shifting knowledge into daily practice and making each of us better.

The Role of Reflection in Professional Growth

Throughout my career, this reflective practice hasn't always been present, and it did not come as an epiphany. However, the sooner I can help others realize the impact of reflection and introspection, the greater their future opportunities will be. Using past experiences assists in gaining knowledge that can be extended to others along your leadership pathway.

This summit was more than just an event—it was a powerful reflection on how we, as 68Zs, can improve ourselves and our organization. The discussions and interactions we shared challenged my thinking and expanded my view of what it means to contribute to Army Medicine. Reflection, as I've learned, is an essential tool in our development, growth, and mentorship. By reflecting on our experiences, both individually and as a team, that we

can drive change, build stronger teams, and influence the future of Army Medicine. As we look ahead, we must continue to leverage our collective strengths, reflect on our experiences, and take action to push the ball down the field—together.

AUTHOR

SGM Jan Krieg currently serves as the 82nd Airborne Division Surgeon Sergeant Major. Prior to his current assignment, he served in multiple organizations across FORSCOM and USASOC. SGM Krieg has completed all levels of NCOPDS, deployed multiple times, and most importantly, is married to his wife Kristina and has three children.