Overview

From the beginning of the Crimean War to the discovery of penicillin, Medical Services and Warfare gathers material from multiple conflicts and institutions to build a picture of the experience and development of medical practice as influenced by the wars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This collection focuses on the Crimean War, the American Civil War and the First World War among other conflicts. The impact on medicine during peacetime is also charted, notably through documents relating to the influenza epidemic of 1918 and post-war rehabilitation.

Thousands of primary source documents selected from prestigious archives and libraries provide a breadth of perspective and material types, including military hospital records of the First World War and family correspondence of Civil War soldiers and the medals they brought home.

Powerful search functionality supported by essays, biographies and interactive features enables a comparative approach to the study of medical practice and innovation during wartime, empowering scholars and students to chart the progress of developments across conflicts and nations.

Document Types

- Hospital reports and registers
- Correspondence
- Memoirs and diaries
- Printed books and periodicals
- Maps, charts and hospital plans
- Photographs, postcards and illustrations
- Objects

“These sources are second to none, and their digitisation has opened up a whole world of material to historians and students.”

Professor Christine Hallett
University of Manchester

Explore the history of illness, treatment and disease on international front lines from 1850 to 1927
Highlights

• The Jonathan Letterman Collection: correspondence and memoirs from the ‘father of battlefield medicine’
• Personal papers of VADs and medical personnel from the Liddle First World War collection
• Interactive mortality data from the American Civil War including detailed patient lists and outcomes
• The American Red Cross collection from the Hoover Institution
• Family correspondence from Civil War nurses and soldiers of both armies
• The Douglas C. McMurtrie collection of printed works on disability and rehabilitation
• Civil War hospital registers from the Briscoe Center for American History
• Papers from the Canadian Department of National Health detailing responses to the 1918 flu epidemic
• Images of artefacts including prostheses, surgical equipment and uniforms
• Contextualising essays from a range of academics on topics such as nursing, hospital care and the development of modern medicine
• Directories of key personnel and medical developments

The Florence Nightingale Papers

Enhanced with Handwritten Text Recognition (HTR) technology, more than 5,000 letters, notes and reports from The Florence Nightingale Papers at the British Library are full-text searchable within Medical Services and Warfare.

Users can utilise HTR to full-text search across professional and personal writings from the beginning of Nightingale’s career to the peak of her renown, including discussions with legislators and nobility, lobbying efforts, statistical analyses and vital reports.

Browse the interactive data visualisation, based on the famous coxcomb diagrams, to identify trends and to filter across letters, notes and reports featured within this unique collection.

Example search result for ‘cholera’
Medical Services and Warfare, 1850-1927 presents military, scientific, professional and personal perspectives on medicine during conflicts across North America and Europe. The collection covers developments including X-rays, plastic surgery, artificial limbs and sanitation, with a focus on rehabilitation, nursing and the psychological toll of war.

Themes

- Ambulance Systems
- Disability
- Hospital Care
- Medical Developments and Equipment
- Mental Health
- Nursing
- Personal Experience
- Public Health, Welfare and Reform
- Rehabilitation
- Sanitation
- Surgery
- Women at War

Source Archives

- Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin
- British Library
- Hoover Institution Library & Archives
- Library and Archives Canada
- National Museum of Civil War Medicine
- Special Collections, University of Leeds
- The National Archives, UK
- The New York Academy of Medicine Library
- U.S. National Library of Medicine

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