Explore the history of illness, treatment and disease on international front lines from 1850 to 1949

Module I: 1850-1927
Module II: 1928-1949

Overview

From the beginning of the Crimean War to the health and social reforms that followed the Second World War, 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 to mid-twentieth centuries.

This collection focuses on the Crimean War, the American Civil War, the First World War, and the Second World War, among other conflicts. The impact on medicine during peacetime is also charted, notably through documents relating to the influenza epidemic of 1918, the discovery of penicillin in 1928, 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 and Second World Wars and family correspondence of Civil War Soldiers.

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.

Material Types

- Hospital reports and registers
- Correspondence
- Memoirs and diaries
- Printed books and periodicals
- Maps, charts and hospital plans
- Photographs, postcards and illustrations
- Objects
- Government documents
- Scientific notebooks
- Audio visual material

“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
Highlights - Module I

- 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*

Highlights - Module II

- The Julius S. Schreiber Papers covering his work on fitness evaluations and mental health training
- The Stanhope Bayne-Jones collection: material on the US Typhus Commission and The Armed Forces Epidemiology Board
- Personal papers of senior British defence personnel, including personal accounts, diaries, letters and official documents relating to their service
- Material from British Government WO222 Medical Historians’ files
- The papers of Ivan Brown, Leo Alexander, Norman Ross, and Opie Norris Smith, physicians at the 65th General Hospital
- Personal letters and diaries of British and American Military Medical personnel
- Material by the renowned Professor of Psychiatry, Sir Aubrey Lewis
- Documents from the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva
- Second World War Footage from the BFI produced on the use of penicillin and advances in blood transfusion

The Florence Nightingale and Alexander Fleming Papers

Sourced from the British Library, the collection contains papers from two of the most pivotal figures in wartime medicine. Enhanced with Handwritten Text Recognition (HTR) technology, more than 5,000 letters, notes and reports from The Florence Nightingale Papers, and 36 volumes of Alexander Fleming’s scientific notebooks are full-text searchable within Medical Services and Warfare.

Users can harness 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.

As well as benefitting from HTR, the Fleming notebooks have been indexed to section level, allowing users to explore his work experiment by experiment. This includes the discovery of penicillin, considered one of the most important medical advances of the 20th Century.

Browse the interactive data visualisations, based on the famous coxcomb diagrams, to identify trends and to filter across documents within these unique and prestigious collections.

* These highlights feature throughout both modules
Medical Services and Warfare, 1850-1949 presents military, scientific, professional and personal perspectives on medicine during conflicts. The collection covers developments including X-rays, plastic surgery, artificial limbs, sanitation, burn treatments and antibiotics, with a focus on rehabilitation, nursing and the psychological toll of war.

Key Themes
- Advances in Plastic Surgery
- Ambulance Systems
- Blood Storage and Shipment
- Burn Treatments
- Disability
- Discovery of Penicillin and the development of antibiotics
- Hospital Care
- Humanitarian Relief
- Interwar Healthcare Improvements
- Medical Developments and Equipment
- Mental Health
- Nursing
- Personal Experience
- Physical Fitness and Performance Enhancement
- Public Health, Welfare and Reform
- Rehabilitation
- Sanitation
- Surgery
- Women at War
- Vaccines and Antidotes

Source Archives
- Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin
- British Library
- The British Film Institute
- Duke University Medical Center Library & Archives
- Hoover Institution Library & Archives
- International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva
- King’s College London
- Library and Archives Canada
- National Museum of Civil War Medicine
- Special Collections, University of Leeds
- The Museum of Military Medicine, UK
- The National Archives, UK
- The New York Academy of Medicine Library
- U.S. National Library of Medicine
- United States Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle Barracks

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