

Military medicine of the Russo-Japanese war and its influence on the modernization of the US army medical department

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Main content

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2015

Spurgeon Neel Annual Award Runner-up

The Army Medical Department Museum Foundation sponsors the Spurgeon Neel Annual Award competition for the best original article that best exemplifies the history, legacy, and tradition of the US Army Medical Department. The following article by Dr Justin Barr was selected as the second best submission of the 2015 competition.

In 1905, Japan shocked the world by becoming the first Asian nation to defeat a western country on the field of battle since Genghis Khan and the Mongols. They simultaneously commanded the attention of the military medical community by claiming to be the first combatant force to suffer fewer deaths from disease than from enemy action. Given the recent, disease-ridden medical debacle of the Spanish-American War, American military medical reformers used Japan's achievements as a model for the US Army Medical Department (AMEDD) to emulate. (1) After briefly defining Japan's said success, this essay reviews the failures of the AMEDD in the Spanish American War. It then highlights how Japan, fighting less than a decade later, appeared to achieve dramatically different results. I conclude first by proving Japan's medical victory fictitious and then by showing how AMEDD reformers nonetheless used the narrative of success to advance their own agenda in modernizing the department.

JAPAN'S SUCCESS AND AMERICA'S FAILURE

Japan and her supporters proudly trumpeted its success controlling disease. Their victory on the field of battle was evident, driving the Russians out of Korea and Manchuria and claiming the territory for themselves. (2) Their conquest over disease appeared equally obvious: Japan lost more men to battle than to disease. Numbers vary based on source consulted, but whereas 53,000 59,000 men died from direct enemy action, only 12,000 27,000 men died from illness. (3) While Japan and its allies claimed priority for this achievement, in fact the Prussians obtained a similar ratio 30 years earlier in the Franco-Prussian War. (4) Nonetheless, compared to most 19th century wars where disease far outstripped combat deaths, Japan seemed to accomplish a monumental feat. (America, for example, did not achieve similar results until World War II.) Figure 1 shows the number of disease deaths per battle death in wars of the 19th century. The graph highlights Japan's apparent success, and it was to graphs and comparisons of this type that Japan and her supporters pointed. Reality, as this essay will prove, was more complicated.

If the Russo-Japanese War was championed as a posterchild of military medical efficiency, the Spanish American War represented its alleged nadir. As Figure 1 also demonstrates, far more Soldiers died from disease in that conflict than from direct contact with the enemy. (6) Combat medicine acquitted itself well, applying the germ theory of disease through antiseptic dressings and deploying new technology like x-rays to manage the combat-wounded; the died-of-wounds rate dropped from 17% in the Civil War to 4%. However, sanitation and public health failed the American Soldier. Bivouacked in camps that paid little heed to waste management, thousands of Soldiers suffered--and died--from diarrhea, 74% of which...

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Military attachés and observers in the Russo-Japanese War were historians creating first-hand accounts of what was arguably the world's first modern war. They helped to create primary-source records of this war between Imperial Russian forces and Imperial Japan forces, which has been characterized by some as a rehearsal for the First World War. The multi-national military attachés and observers who took part in the Russo-Japanese War were expressly engaged in collecting data and analyzing the Military medicine of the Russo-Japanese war and its influence on the modernization of the US army medical department. A chapter from one of Reesman's previous books introduces the Russo-Japanese War. The other essays, which vary in depth and consistency, interweave London's activities during each episode with reference to his writing. Jack London, Photographer. The Russo-Japanese War's recent centennial has inspired new scholarship, bringing contemporary perspectives to this pivotal event. The Kwantung Army was a unit of the Japanese Imperial Army established in 1906 and dispatched to protect areas in southern Manchuria after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. Former Japanese spy to publish memoirs on Tibet before WWII. The focus will be on the symptomatic and causal therapy of colic resulting from ureteric stones in order to facilitate the fastest possible restoration of the soldier's fitness for deployment. Deployment, Diseases, Urology. Report: F. Hengstermann. Medical support of infantry operations. The medical evaluation should be made according to the nature and prognosis of disease , therapeutic efficacy, as well as the flying airplane type. Diseases, Military Medicine. Article: J. Meyer, J. Koch, O. Krieter (Germany). Military Medical Support in the Humanitarian Arena (MMSHA). From the department of military hygiene, Faculty of Military Health Sciences University of Defence, Hradec Králové, Czech Republic. Afghanistan. Report: J. Hoitz. The outbreak of the First World War and the emergence of Russia as Britain's 'glorious ally' swiftly changed public attitudes in Britain, which had been largely, but not entirely, hostile to Russia. The sense that Britain needed to cure its 'abysmal ignorance' of Russia, coupled with the strong desire to replace Germany, the enemy, as a trading partner with Russia led to the initiation of the [Show full abstract] teaching of the language at eight or more university-standard establishments. The material and intellectual foundation of the nascent departments of Russi... In the later stages of World War I, the Allied Powers dispatched an expeditionary force to Siberia, with Japan and the United States sending the most troops.