

Foreword

Far too often the lessons learned from past wars have been forgotten at great cost to human life. A complacency in our society that armed conflicts will not occur may prevail. Operation Desert Shield, however, has accentuated the importance of military medical operations in times of presumed peace throughout the world. Regardless of our natural tendency to concentrate on peacetime health care, the conflict in the Persian Gulf indelibly imprints the fact that we must be ready to care for those who fight for peace. Armed conflict to resolve political differences among nations will occur despite the dramatic technological, social, and economic progress of the twentieth century.

As those of us in military medicine prepare to support our forces in the Persian Gulf, we must be ready for the challenges presented by modern warfare in this current situation, and later as we proceed into the next century. Because modern warfare will continue to rely on soldier-to-soldier fighting, conventional munitions will be a significant source of casualties regardless of the sophisticated weaponry. Ballistic, blast, and burn injuries in austere settings will continue to demand the attention of the medical corps in order to provide the best possible care and to save lives.

To meet these challenges, the Army Medical Department has embarked on an ambitious readiness initiative. This new doctrine focuses on far-forward surgical care, increased intensive-care capabilities, a policy of returning soldiers to duty as far forward as possible, improved ground and air evacuation capabilities, new medical logistics systems that incorporate blood-distribution networks, and improved management of combat stress. Our goals are to maintain our momentum as we conserve fighting strength and to support our soldiers and their families both in peacetime and in time of war. We cannot afford to forget them.

The military health-care system is the largest comprehensive health-care organization in the United States. Because the vast majority of our patients are not active-duty military personnel, it may seem that our day-to-day activities are far removed from those we would be required to perform during a time of war. Our highest priority is to be able to deploy a highly trained medical corps to any area of the world, however. To be effective, we must maintain the highest standards of technical competence and also be prepared to use our skills creatively and courageously in situations that may be primitive, dangerous, or unknown.

It is my hope that you will find this volume of the *Textbook of Military Medicine* series a useful addition to your readiness training programs, and that it will stimulate you to think about and plan for what will be required of each of us should the need arise again to make a transition from peace to war.

Lieutenant General Frank F.
The Surgeon General
U.S. Army

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