

## THE TRAINING OF FIELD MEDICAL UNITS

BY

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### TRAINING PROGRAMMES

The production of a good Training Programme is not merely a method of appeasing higher authority and of enabling administrative officers to keep an eye on the activities of units, but it is essential if the best use is to be made of any period of training.

#### THE TIME FACTOR

The total time available for Training may vary from a short break in operations to some years. It is convenient to plan Training Programmes in three-month periods. In the old Field Ambulance with two Companies and a Headquarters Company it may have been convenient for the C.O. to give to Company Commanders a syllabus of the training to be done in each three-month period and to let them work out their programmes in detail. With the modern Field Ambulance one unit Training Programme will probably be preferable. The unit may be divided into Training Groups.

*The working period* is the yardstick by which the Training day is measured. The most convenient period is one hour which should include the necessary short break. The mid-morning break may be staggered so that different groups have different times of attendance, e.g. those at 1000 hours break at 0950 and fall in again at 1010, etc.

For *the working day* eight hours is usually enough, and breakfast and billet fatigues should be finished before the Training Day begins. Routine daily inspections by Company Commanders, etc., should be completed before the clock hour to avoid interference with a training period. The suggested hours are morning 8 a.m. to 12, lunch 12 to 1 p.m., and afternoon 1 to 5 p.m. or 1.30 to 5.30 p.m.

*The working week* consists of five days, i.e. 40 hours, as Sundays and Saturday afternoons should be free, and one whole afternoon a week should be given to organized games. If the month is taken as consisting of 28 days the spare days can be used for revision or for any periods which have been unavoidably missed.

*Total time* available in three months is therefore twelve weeks, sixty days, or 480 hours.

*General considerations:* Lectures immediately after lunch should be avoided since even on the somewhat meagre ration now offered to the soldier most of

the audience tend to fall asleep. The weekly organized games should aim at getting every man to play some sort of game. Unit teams and other enthusiasts will play games in their spare time. Men who consistently dodge games may be put on guard, etc., on the weekly games afternoon. Fatigues, guards and other duties connected with the unit's interior economy are apt to play havoc with the Training Programme, and the Quartermaster and Regimental Serjeant Major especially must be watched in this connexion. Proper guards are only needed at night and Regimental Police are usually sufficient by day, though in some circumstances billet orderlies may also have to be used.

If members of guards and fire pickets have had the opportunity to get eight hours' sleep between mounting and dismounting they should not be allowed off any parades on the following day. Defaulters can get through a lot of work in off-duty times if properly supervised, but it may sometimes be better to employ a whole Section or Training Group at a time on necessary camp or billet fatigues.

#### PERSONNEL FACTORS

A new C.O. must study the present state of unit and individual training, and should avoid making sweeping changes in the methods of training, at least at the outset. It is best not to interfere with the training of such men as cooks and clerks except to include them in certain essential training. When new trainees are posted to the cookhouse or office the serjeant cook or the chief clerk should be asked to outline their intended scheme of training. The Quartermaster and Regimental Serjeant Major usually have enough clerical experience to be able to help in the supervision of clerks' training. Cooks can attend A.C.C. courses, and are in any case daily practising their specialty so that they should not become rusty.

Ideally, only men who have had a full course of Field Ambulance Training should be posted to specialist departments.

The types of employment suitable for the more or less untrainable men have been discussed, and for most of such jobs they should have some preliminary training, e.g. Regimental Police, Dining Room orderlies and Cooks' Assistants, Officers' orderlies and Mess orderlies, etc. The C.O. must ensure that specialists are given opportunities to pass trade tests and to qualify for advancement in their trade, and also that they are physically fit and able to march when necessary. A separate P.T. class may be necessary for them, and a serjeant may be put in charge of all employed men and specialists to ensure that they do not evade P.T. and other essential training. When untrained reinforcements join the unit it is best to wait until there are enough of them to form a separate cadre with its own programme. If the future role of the unit does not call for intensive training it may be wise to set the standard of training during the first three months at the level of men of limited capacities, and during these months to separate them into the more and the less intelligent groups. For those who have proved to be above the average a more advanced programme can then be devised, and from them

will be chosen the nursing orderlies, understudies for various specialists, and the potential N.C.O.s.

In order that the R.A.S.C. members of the unit can be given instruction in certain Field Ambulance subjects without undue interference with their normal duties they may be split into two or more groups and be attached to R.A.M.C. Training Groups for the necessary non-technical training.

The unit will tend for training purposes to fall into four categories: (i) The Stretcher bearers as the solid core; (ii) the employed men and specialists; (iii) the dullards, new untrained recruits, and men who have missed training owing to illness, detachment from the unit, or premature specialization; (iv) the most intelligent men, who can be further subdivided into potential N.C.O.s, a cadre for higher nursing training, etc.

Division into Training Groups and into various cadres may tend to cause men to lose sight of the normal organization of the unit, and of the sub-unit in which they will serve in action. This tendency can be corrected by having the normal organization of the unit permanently displayed on a notice board, and of course by using that organization on all exercises. The extent to which subjects will be taught by officers or by N.C.O.s will depend to some extent on their capabilities. Obviously some instruction should be given direct by officers, but on the whole N.C.O.s are the instructing element, and relay to their men the instruction which they have received from the officers, who may each have some specific subject allotted to them by the C.O.

#### SUBJECTS TO BE TAUGHT

These will vary with the future theatre of operations, and the unit's tactical role, the time available for training, and the present state of the unit's training. Each subject should be classified as:

(i) Common to the whole unit, e.g. Physical Fitness, Foot Drill, Anti-Gas Training, knowledge of Order of Battle and Deployment of the Division, and Tactical Exercises.

(ii) Common to the bulk of the unit, i.e. the Stretcher Bearers—e.g. Map Reading, Stretcher Carrying, Fieldcraft and Visual Training, Pannier Drill, etc.

(iii) Specialists' training, and that of the most intelligent men which will vary with the number of special cadres formed. Understudies should be trained for all specialists and key men such as the Chief Clerk, Q.M.S., etc., who could take over at once if they become casualties. One cannot train too many men in clerical work. The M.T.O. should train understudy drivers from among the R.A.M.C.

Individual subjects may be allotted to various officers who divide them up into hourly periods and then discuss each précis with the C.O. If the familiar and important subjects of First Aid is taken as an example, the series of lectures up to about N.O. III standard might be: (i) Structure of Cells and Tissues; (ii) Bones and Muscles; Structure and Functions; (iii) Fractures—

Diagnosis and Treatment; (iv) Circulatory System; (v) Hæmorrhage—Symptoms and Arrest; (vi) Composition of Blood—Mechanism of Clotting; (vii) Transfusion and Transfusion Fluids; (viii) Anatomy and Physiology of Lungs; (ix) Chest Wounds; (x) Digestive Tract; (xi) Abdominal Wounds; (xii) Renal System; (xiii) Bladder and Kidney Wounds; (xiv) Wounds of Upper Limb—Splints and Slings; (xv) Wounds of Lower Limb—Splints, etc.; (xvi) The Thomas Splint; (xvii) The Rifle Splint.

This example illustrates the importance of the careful preparation and breaking down into periods lengths which must be done before the teaching of any subject is begun.

Revision Periods, questions and answers, should be done frequently, and a Test of Individual Training at the end of each Quarter, to assess how much has been achieved in each subject. In theoretical subjects these tests may take the form of a written paper which also helps one to see which men are capable of clear thought and can express themselves well.

Examples of Subjects split up:

*Minor Tactical Exercises.*—Instructor-Major ———, Cadres-Corporals A & B Secs Sjts- C & D Secs. Each instructional period to consist of four hours. Cadre instruction Weds 0800 Relay instruction Fri 1300. i.e. N.C.O. instructors pass on to Sections what they learn from the officer instructor. All reconnaissances and sites for exercises notified to C.O. a week in advance.

Task 1: Establishment of C.C.P. in open country, according to diagram shown in Information Room. Dispersion to be practised.

Task 2: C.C.P. in thick wooded country, use of natural camouflage, and attention to shifting shadow. Proper sign-posting practised.

Task 3: C.C.P. in buildings. Reconnaissance of buildings, blackout, etc.

Task 4: C.C.P. to open, close, and move twice. One vehicle to be "knocked out" and the doubling up of loads practised.

Task 5: C.C.P. crossing trackless country using only jeeps to carry essentials. Practice creation of a "B Echelon" for the less essential stores.

Task 6: C.C.P. opening, closing, and moving by night.

Task 7: C.C.P. crossing minor river obstacle. Stores to be manhandled and vehicles to cross empty.

Task 8: C.C.P. working split—half of it left behind holding casualties. Methods of keeping touch to be practised.

Tasks 9 to 12: The above lessons to be fitted into a series of Tactical Exercises, during which in even numbered tasks A & B secs can act as C.C.P.s and C & D as R.A.P.s; their personnel other than drivers and the N.C.O. in charge being allotted casualty labels and being evacuated. For odd numbered tasks the roles are reversed.

*Physical Fitness.*—Chief Instructor—the unit Sports Officer. No cadre required.

One hour's P.T. a day, under N.C.O. i/c P.T. Orderly Sjt to ensure attendance of employed personnel.

Assault Course to be laid out and each Group to spend an hour a day on its construction until it is completed. Everyone to go over it twice a week.

Digging: Each man to dig his own P.A.D. trench, and slit trenches to be dug on all exercises.

Route Marches lasting at least four hours a week. The route should be reconnoitred and published in orders. On one day a week the Orderly Officer should take over the same route all those who missed the march for reasons other than unfitness.

Men of Field Ambulances should be allotted vacancies on Courses of Instruction arranged by the G Staff, and may be attached to other units within the Division to learn other subjects. The Courses most likely to be useful are Driver Mechanics Courses, and Weapon Training for the R.A.S.C., Chemical Warfare, Educational Instructors Courses, and Courses for Clerks, including Pay Clerks, and for C.Q.M.S.s, Animal Management if Animal Transport is to be used, and courses in the handling of Assault Boats especially those with outboard motors.

Attachments to other units may include that of Carpenters to a Field Squadron R.E., and Sanitary Orderlies to the nearest Field Hygiene Company. The unit M.T.O., who must act as Weapon Training Officer for the R.A.S.C., may be made responsible for any training in handling arms or throwing grenades which may in certain circumstances have to be given to the R.A.M.C. Promotion Cadres of a fortnight to a month may be formed to train potential candidates for promotion to Corporal and Serjeant; and Instructor Cadres for training unit instructors who will then pass on their knowledge to their classes, may be organized in such subjects as Chemical Warfare, Transfusion, Map Reading, etc.

It will be seen that by no means all of the available hours are accounted for but there will be no difficulty in filling in the hours when one remembers the claims of Educational and semi-recreational training, Padre's hours, and the many subjects described in the body of the article.

The First Aid syllabus will serve for men who have still to take their N.O. III examination, but for those who have got their qualifications a greater proportion of the time should be spent on Hæmorrhage, Shock and Blood Transfusion, and this could be done by giving only the briefest outlines of such subjects as the Anatomy and Physiology of the Renal and Digestive Systems, etc., and using the time thus saved for revision and questions on those subjects which are of particular importance to Field Ambulance men.

#### WET WEATHER ALTERNATIVES

It is useful to have a list of Wet Weather Alternatives, which are numbered and so can be laid on very quickly when a change of programme is necessary for any reason. These include Practice in Message Writing,

Revision of Hæmorrhage and Shock, Bandaging and Splinting, Ten minute lectures by the men themselves, various forms of recreational training including language study, making and painting signs, making up tins of pre-sterilized dressings, etc., and the reading of unit Standing Orders for War. The choice of subject is left to officers in charge of Training Groups. Occasional days must also be given to Section Officers for training their men on their own lines. In language study one should concentrate on the language of the enemy, and of allied troops, etc. Considerable initial enthusiasm at the outset is apt to decline as the earlier stages are passed. Many of us must confess to reaching Lesson 12, only to lose heart as the rules of grammar begin to savour of the schoolroom. However, a lot can be achieved if each day a useful phrase in one or more languages with its phonetic spelling is published in Part I Orders.