

Original Communications

**TRAINING IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL
DEPARTMENT**

BY

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THE best index of an army's readiness for war is the standard of its training both individual and collective. Each man must be trained to ensure that he will play an efficient and co-operative role in a team whatever its function. Teams must be trained to provide a concentrated and sustained effort to defeat the enemy. In its vital and indispensable role in an army organization the medical services must maintain in peace a body of men who are highly skilled in professional, technical and military duties.

The United States Army Medical Department is very conscious of its heavy responsibility and provides dynamic programmes and excellent facilities for the training of its officers and enlisted men.

One of the factors which has shaped the type of training given to U.S. Army Medical Corps officers in the post-war period has been the necessity to provide an attractive career by emphasizing professional training. This was possible as most pre-war regular officers had had extensive field experience during the war. Now, however, a good number of these officers have been rehabilitated in clinical work and many of them have qualified as specialists while junior officers have had extensive clinical experience and a carefully selected number have been given the opportunity to become specialists, indeed some have already received Specialty Board certification which corresponds roughly to obtaining higher qualifications in Britain.

As a further step in preparing regular officers to play their proper role in war additional instruction and practical opportunity will be provided in field responsibility as administrative and commanding officers. On commissioning, officers will receive a basic course in military medicine at the Medical Field Service School, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and the Army Medical Research and Graduate School, Washington, D.C., followed by two years' field experience. Other officers, including those more experienced, will be brought up to date with an advanced course at the Medical Field Service School. Courses at schools of other arms and services, at the Command and General Staff College, the National War College, etc., will also provide medical officers with an interesting and wide

scope of training which will fit them to carry out their responsibilities as Army medical officers. In fact, the concept of military medicine as a close integration of medical and military sciences without prejudice to either is slowly being achieved by a carefully co-ordinated pattern of training.

The planning and supervision of the training of regular and reserve officers and enlisted men in the U.S. Army Medical Department is in the hands of the Education and Training Division of the Surgeon-General's Office. Training courses are not casual episodes but are intimately co-ordinated with the career pattern of the officer and enlisted man. Modern developments in the wide field of medical science create a challenge to those who plan military medical training and to meet it the closest co-operation is maintained with military and medical centres of research and education. Constant contact is maintained with civilian medical and educational bodies. Training programmes are subject to continued critical appraisal to ensure that in the light of modern developments the Army officer or enlisted man will be justly proud of his proficiency. Systematic instruction is given in two well-equipped schools, The Medical Field Service School, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and the Army Medical Research and Graduate School, Washington, D.C., as well as in four large military teaching hospitals. Instruction comprises lectures and demonstrations with the liberal use of audio-visual aids, discussions, and by means of individual and group performance, emphasis being placed on reasoning rather than memory. Instructors are carefully selected on the basis of their personality, experience and teaching ability. Above all there prevails a spirit of infectious enthusiasm which, with carefully planned curricula, prevents training from becoming dreary or monotonous.

In the following article Colonel F. L. Wergeland, Chief of the Surgeon-General's Education and Training Division, describes concisely the scope of training in the U.S. Army Medical Department. In doing so he is dealing with a subject which has been his main interest most of his Service career and in which he shares with his Surgeon-General a progressive outlook.

Colonel Wergeland is a native of Montana who received his M.D. in 1932 in sunny California where he also did his internship before being commissioned in the regular Army Medical Corps. He graduated in 1935 from the Medical Field Service School, in 1938 from the Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia, and in 1941 from the Command and General Staff College. Apart from some two years (1946-48) as Senior Medical Adviser to the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group to the Republic of China, most of his service has been concerned with training. In 1936-37 he was Chief of Professional Services, Fort McClellan, Alabama, in 1938-41 on the Staff of the Medical Field Service School after which he became Director of Organization and Training and Executive Officer at the Medical Replacement Training Center, Camp Barkeley, Texas. Since 1944, excluding his two years in China, he has been Chief of the Surgeon-General's Education and Training Division and has seen many changes take place in that time.