

MEDICINE

Pearl Harbor Was Scene of Sweeping Victory for Drugs

Thorough Medical Preparedness, Quick Action and Success Of Sulfa Preparations Prevented Infections in Wounds

PEARL HARBOR was a sweeping victory for the new sulfa drugs and our soldiers who fight disease and repair human bodies.

The Army medical corps was alert, ready, and it scored the world's greatest success in any war in the fight against battle wounds, infections and death.

The story can now be told. It is detailed in a report made to the Army's Surgeon General James C. Magee, by Dr. Perrin Long, of Johns Hopkins Medical School, the man responsible for introducing the sulfa drugs into America. Dr. Long was accompanied on a mission to Hawaii by Dr. I. S. Ravdin, professor of surgery at the University of Pennsylvania.

In the Army hospitals there, the doctors saw badly wounded men who looked and felt well. They were "amazed" at what they saw. Men who by all past standards should have died were recovering, eager to get back in the fight. There was absence of pus in the men's wounds, mildness of post-operative reactions, and swift, clean healing of wounds.

Sulfa drugs plus good organization that gave the wounded prompt attention performed this wonder.

Even among men whose wounds had been contaminated with the fertilizer-dirty soil of Hickam and Wheeler Fields, and who had not had their wounds cleaned out by debridement for 24 hours, not a single massive infection was found 10 days later.

Infection, which in World War I killed 80% of the men with abdominal wounds alone, hardly occurred in Hawaii. Compound fractures of bones and injury of the flesh, for instance, showed that less than 4% such injuries became infected.

Not a single loss of arm or leg was necessary because of infection. The only amputations reported were those made by the shell splinter or other missile.

Credit for this remarkable record is shared by the sulfa drugs and the efficient preparations of far-sighted Col. Edgar L. King, surgeon-in-charge of the Army's medical forces in Hawaii.

In the spring of 1941, when most people thought Hawaii safe and such extensive preparations foolish, Col. King organized all civilian, Navy and Army medical forces to meet possible disaster.

When the attack started, the first medical man on the line was a young doctor who, as medical officer of the day, had gone out on Hickam Field at 7 o'clock on that fateful Sunday morning. Armed with a Flit gun, and accompanied by the crash ambulance, he was on routine duty to meet and disinfect a flight of U. S. bombers expected from the mainland. He noted a flight of planes coming in, and then the bombs dropped. He and the rest of the medical corps were ready. All Hickam Field's own ambulances were immediately "broken out." From Schofield Barracks and from Tripler, the Army's big base hospital, came more ambulances. From Honolulu came the milk and laundry trucks which had already been prepared for instant conversion into ambulances.

The sergeant in charge of medical supplies, when the first bomb fell at 7 a.m., threw open the great warehouse and loaded materials at once onto all his trucks, without waiting for a call for them.

At Hickam Field, Col. Frank Lane, surgeon-in-charge, immediately set up an efficient evacuation system with 12 ambulances so that the badly shocked among the wounded got first attention and those with a chance to live were not kept lying in the field while the ambulances were filled with men who would be dead before they reached the hospital, as might have happened under a less careful evacuation system.

When the wounded men arrived, their wounds were first debrided, that is, every bit of dead or dying flesh that could give food for germs was cut away. Then sulfanilamide was dusted into the wounds, 68 grams (more than two ounces) at a time. Then each man was given sulfathiazole by mouth, as a further aid in stopping invading germs before they could do any damage. That morning when the first alarm sounded,

14 pounds of sulfa drugs were brought up from the basement of Tripler Hospital, where hundreds of pounds were stored, in readiness for the doctors.

There was no shortage of supplies. Blood plasma banks had been prepared in advance. On Dec. 4, Col. King had withdrawn 58,000 surgical dressings from the warehouses and put them into the storehouses of the hospitals.

The medical epic of Pearl Harbor ends with two letters, just received by Gen. Magee from General Wallace DeWitt and Col. Emerson, of the Army's Letterman Hospital in San Francisco, where the first contingent of wounded from Hawaii have arrived.

All the men were in excellent shape on arrival, testimonial to the excellent treatment they had received. Col. Emerson emphasized the high morale and cheerfulness of these wounded men, concluding:

"They are in the best condition of any war casualties I have ever observed."

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ETHNOLOGY

Haiti Reported Giving Up Ancient Voodoo Cult

VOODOO shrines have been vanishing so fast in Haiti in the past few months that it will soon be hard to find a sacred fig tree or a post representing an African god, except in deep jungle, in all the West Indian republic.

An intensive missionary drive is credited with spurring the downfall of voodoo gods, by Dr. Alfredo Metraux, archaeologist, who has recently returned from Haiti bringing a rare collection of the discarded cult goods for the Smithsonian Institution.

Heretofore, it would have been impossible to make such a collection for science, Dr. Metraux explains. A ten-cent rattle ceremonially filled with voodoo power is worth hundreds of dollars—or was, before missionaries succeeded in convincing Haitians that Christianity and voodoo should not mix. Many prominent church members have been ardent voodoo cultists, Dr. Metraux explains.

Voodoo objects gathered by Dr. Metraux include drums, vases, wooden bowls, pipes, satchels of earth, stone axes and other prehistoric Indian-made articles, rattles, crucifixes and images of saints.

Voodoo worship is not particularly secret, says Dr. Metraux, but the black magic, which may accompany it, is.

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