The Medical Corps consists of Officers representing the various specialties and subspecialties found in civilian medicine. Medical Corps Officers may be assigned to clinical staff positions, executive leadership positions, as teaching faculty, to fixed military medical facilities, to deployable combat units or field hospitals, or to military medical research and development laboratories.

MISSION: Oversee the distribution of Army Medical Corps Officers to ensure a Ready Medical Force and a Medically Ready Force while providing for the professional development and personal growth of our Officers.

VISION: Clinically and operationally proficient Medical Corps Officers who role model LDRSHIP and embody professional excellence as Soldiers, clinicians, scientists, and scholars.

GOALS: Right Medical Corps Officer in the right assignment opportunity to meet the needs of our Army, their individual professional development, and their personal growth.

For more information please visit the following web sites:

Army Medical Corps History Biographies: http://history.amedd.army.mil/biographies.html

AMEDD Center of History and Heritage: http://history.amedd.army.mil

US Army Medical Department Regiment: http://ameddregiment.amedd.army.mil

US Army Medical Department Museum: http://ameddmuseum.amedd.army.mil

AMEDD Center of History and Heritage Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/medhistory

The Continental Congress authorized a “Hospital” for the care and well-being of the Continental Army. The term “Medical Corps” was used informally for many years prior to its official designation in 1908. Both the department and the profession changed countless times over the following two centuries.

When the Army Medical Department was established in 1775, medical officers were not commissioned and therefore did not hold military rank. The Director General and Chief Physician had authority only over the hospitals established to support the Army. The War of 1812 necessitated the creation of a large military force once again. In 1818, the Congress established a permanent Medical Department. Medical officers still received no military rank but were organized within the department by the titles of Surgeon General, Regimental Surgeon, Post Surgeon, and Regimental Surgeon’s Mate.
Finally, in 1884, Congress passed an act stating that “officers of the Medical Department shall take rank and precedence in accordance with date of commission or appointment, and shall be so borne on the official Army Register.”

In the late 19th Century, conflicts and disease would pave the way for incredible discovery. Army physicians were responsible for saving countless lives directly as well as through their discoveries. It is a noble tradition that continues today.

Many accomplishments by members of the Army Medical Corps went beyond the Army Medical Department affecting both military and worldwide health.

In 1814, surgeons in the Medical Department began tracking and reporting weather conditions at various locations. This was the beginning of a systematic recording of meteorological conditions on a national level, a process which would eventually influence establishment of the US Meteorological Service.

For his actions on the battlefield in 1861, Assistant Surgeon Bernard Irwin became the first physician awarded the Medal of Honor, although the actual award ceremony took place much later in his career. Irwin received the Medal of Honor for bravery in a fight against Apache Indians led by Cochise.

Assistant Surgeon Bernard J.D. Irwin (Source: Army Medical Department: 1818-1865)

Jonathan Letterman was appointed Medical Director in 1862. His insights resulted in today’s field medical service system: an ambulance evacuation system, an echeloned surgical resuscitation and surgical system, including battlefield surgery.

Between 1870 and 1888, the 6,000 page, six-volume text, The Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion, created the first official military medical history of an army’s medical service during a war. This seminal work was formulated from medical reports submitted to the Surgeon General during the Civil War.

From 1876 the Surgeon General’s Library, headed by John Shaw Billings, produced the Index Medicus and Index Catalogue, “probably the most original and distinctive contribution of America to the medicine of the world” and would become the core of the National Library of Medicine.

Surgeon General George Sternberg established the Army Medical School in 1893, the first institution in the world dedicated to teaching public health and preventive medicine, including laboratories for studying chemistry, bacteriology, anatomy and physiology, and one of the first X-ray machines in the United States. Later it became the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, named after its faculty member who discovered the etiology of Typhoid and Yellow Fever.

Assistant Surgeon Bernard J.D. Irwin (Source: Army Medical Department: 1818-1865)

While assigned to the Army Medical School in 1910, Carl Darnall developed a method for sterilizing water using anhydrous chlorine. This technique made clean water a possibility for much of the world’s population for the first time.