A highly organized system was put in place to move wounded men quickly off the battlefield. They were sent to aid stations, then field hospitals, and, if necessary, to evacuation and base hospitals where they received successively more complex levels of care.

Doctors developed new antiseptics and liberally administered tetanus antitoxins in an attempt to prevent infections.

“A war benefits medicine more than it benefits anybody else. It’s terrible, of course, but true.”
-Dr. Mary Merritt Crawford, surgeon at the American Hospital in France, about 1919

**MEDICINE AND WAR**

Many soldiers were killed in the horrific fighting, often by exploding artillery shells. But the desperate needs—and sheer number—of those who survived their wounds or gas attacks inspired innovations in trauma care, medical evacuation strategies, surgical and nursing procedures, and rehabilitation practices.

Before millions of recruits were sent to France, military physicians evaluated their health and physical condition, providing the basis for the nation’s first comprehensive health assessment.

Smithsonian

**WORLD WAR I: LESSONS AND LEGACIES**

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Many of those who survived underwent new types of physical and occupational therapy in order to return them to “usefulness.” Stateside, the government established a system of special veterans hospitals that in 1921 became part of a newly established Veterans Bureau.