

251 *Years*

COMBAT READY CARE ... THIS WE'LL DEFEND!

★ SINCE 1775 ★

HONORING OUR LEGACY, ***TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE***

Our history is defined by innovation. Our present is defined by readiness. Our future is defined by transformation.



Since July 27, 1775, Army Medicine has stood beside America's Soldiers wherever the Nation has called them to serve. From treating Continental Soldiers during the Revolutionary War to enabling multidomain operations today, Army Medicine has continuously adapted to meet the demands of increasingly complex battlefields.



The 251st birthday is not solely a celebration of history. It is a reaffirmation of Army Medicine's enduring purpose: to conserve the fighting strength by delivering combat ready care that sustains health, preserves combat power, and returns Soldiers to the fight.



Every conflict has demanded innovation. Every generation has transformed. Every medic, nurse, physician, dentist, veterinarian, Medical Service Corps officer, Medical Specialist Corps officer, civilian, and teammate has strengthened the profession while advancing military medicine.



As Army Medicine enters its next century, it continues transforming for future conflict by integrating emerging technologies, strengthening operational medical capabilities, modernizing formations, and preparing medical forces capable of supporting large-scale combat operations anywhere in the world.

The Army Medicine 251st Birthday is more than a historical milestone. It is an opportunity to reinforce Army Medicine's role as an indispensable warfighting capability that has preserved combat power for more than two and a half centuries. This legacy paper establishes the strategic narrative, messaging framework and communications objectives for commemorating 251 years of Army Medicine while connecting its proud history to its future transformation.

LEGACY THROUGH HISTORY

REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Army Medicine began with a simple mission: care for Soldiers fighting for a new Nation. The establishment of the “Hospital” for the Continental Army set the precedent that medical care is an essential warfighting function.



CIVIL WAR

Modern battlefield evacuation, organized ambulances and battlefield hospitals emerged. Maj. Jonathan Letterman revolutionized military medicine by creating the first organized ambulance corps and triage system. His logistical brilliance ensured medical readiness was fully integrated into tactical planning, a doctrine still used by militaries around the world today.



WORLD WAR I

Preventive medicine, sanitation and infectious disease control dramatically improved force health protection.



WORLD WAR II

The Army Medical Department pioneered the widespread use of penicillin, whole blood transfusions, and the deployment of mobile surgical hospitals (which later evolved into MASH units), drastically reducing the mortality rate of wounded soldiers.



VIETNAM WAR

The Vietnam War marked a turning point in battlefield medicine with the widespread use of helicopter aeromedical evacuation. The “Dustoff” mission transformed trauma response by rapidly moving critically wounded Soldiers from the point of injury to surgical care within the golden hour, establishing a new standard for battlefield survivability.



GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

Tactical Combat Casualty Care, rapid evacuation, damage control resuscitation and multidisciplinary trauma systems produced unprecedented battlefield survival outcomes.



TODAY'S ARMY

As the Department of Defense prepares for Large Scale Combat Operations and multidomain warfare, Army Medicine is modernizing to meet the demands of tomorrow's battlefields.

- Extended care concepts
- Autonomous casualty evacuation
- Artificial intelligence
- Data-driven medical operations
- Prolonged casualty care
- Medical modernization
- Expeditionary health systems
- Human performance optimization



INNOVATION THROUGH SERVICE: WHEN HISTORY SHAPED THE FUTURE



Dr. Benjamin Church is recognized as the first Surgeon General of the Continental Army, appointed by the Second Continental Congress in 1775. He helped establish the Army's first organized medical system, overseeing hospitals, medical personnel, and care for wounded Soldiers during the American Revolutionary War. His appointment marked the beginning of what would become 251 years of Army Medicine's commitment to preserving the health and readiness of the force.

Learn more at: <https://achh.army.mil/history/book-rev-gillett1-ch2>



Dr. Mary Edwards Walker was a pioneering physician whose service during the Civil War helped redefine the role of women in military medicine. After earning her medical degree in 1855, she became the first female surgeon employed by the U.S. War Department, serving on the front lines, enduring capture as a prisoner of war and returning to duty after her release. In 1865, she became the first and only woman to receive the Medal of Honor for her extraordinary service, a distinction restored in 1977 after the award was rescinded under changing eligibility standards. Her legacy of courage, perseverance and commitment to caring for Soldiers continues to inspire Army Medicine today.

Learn more at: www.army.mil/article/183800/meet_dr_mary_walker_the_only_female_medal_of_honor_recipient



Dr. Robert S. Ledley served as an Army dentist during the Korean War before becoming an inventor and pioneering biomedical engineer whose innovations transformed modern medicine. He developed the first whole body computed tomography (CT) scanner, introducing a technology that revolutionized medical imaging and diagnosis around the world. His groundbreaking work continues to enhance patient care for both military and civilian medicine.

Learn more at: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5869276>



Maj. Patrick Henry Brady transformed battlefield casualty evacuation through his extraordinary service as a DUSTOFF helicopter pilot during the Vietnam War. Awarded the Medal of Honor for repeatedly flying into enemy fire to evacuate wounded Soldiers, Brady demonstrated the lifesaving value of rapid aeromedical evacuation. His courage and leadership helped establish helicopter medical evacuation as a cornerstone of modern Army Medicine, a capability that continues to save lives on today's battlefields.

Learn more at: <https://achh.army.mil/regiment/moh-bios-brady>



Retired Army Col. (Dr.) John B. Holcomb is a pioneering Army trauma surgeon whose contributions transformed modern combat casualty care. During his Army career, including service as commander of the U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research, Holcomb helped redesign battlefield medical evacuation, championed the Joint Theater Trauma Registry to standardize trauma care and advanced lifesaving treatments that have improved survival for wounded service members. His groundbreaking work earned him the Maj. Jonathan Letterman Medical Excellence Award, recognizing his lasting impact on military medicine.

Learn more at: www.jbsa.mil/News/News/Article/1004372/former-usaisr-commander-receives-2016-medical-excellence-award

ARMY DIRECT REPORTING UNIT (DRU) TEAM 12 BEST SQUAD COMPETITION



The 2026 U.S. Army Direct Reporting Unit Team 12 Best Squad Competition marked a new chapter in Army Medicine's legacy of developing exceptional Soldiers by emphasizing the Army's foundational fighting element: the squad. Held July 20–24, the competition brought together six squads from across Army Medicine to compete in a demanding series of events that tested physical endurance, tactical proficiency, marksmanship, land navigation, leadership, teamwork and the ability to perform under pressure.

More than a competition, the event demonstrated Army Medicine's commitment to building combat ready medical formations capable of succeeding in complex operational environments. By reinforcing the principles of shared hardship, disciplined teamwork and readiness, the competition reflected the priorities outlined in the Army Medicine Strategic Plan and the Army's focus on preparing cohesive teams that can fight, survive and win on tomorrow's battlefield. Team 5, Medical Readiness Command, East earned the honor of representing Army Medicine at the U.S. Army Best Squad Competition, carrying forward a 251-year tradition of excellence in service to the Nation.

Read more at: www.dvidshub.net/news/570692/mrc-east-squad-wins-2026-army-medicine-best-squad-competition

