
Health Under Fire: Medical Care During America’s Wars focuses on US conflicts and wars starting with colonial conflicts (pre-US) and ending with wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan. This historical reference highlights connections between war and health. It traces the evolution of medical practices during times of war. Health Under Fire: Medical Care During America’s Wars not only looks at the unique health challenges during times of war, but also looks at medical advances made during these times in history.

Each chapter focuses on one conflict or war. The chapters are all arranged in the same way, with three sections. The first section is an introduction and provides an overview of the conflict or war. The second section, “Entries,” is cross-disciplinary, examining historical topics of interest in the military, medicine, and health and wellness during the time period of the war. For example, a few of the entries in the chapter for the Civil War are “Clara Burton” and “Hospital Trains,” with many others. Entries in the chapter for the “Wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan” range from “Biological Weapons and Warfare” to “Gulf War Syndrome” to the “Veterans Heath Care Act of 1992.” Each individual entry ends with a list of references for further reading. I believe the last section, “Documents”, is what sets Health Under Fire: Medical Care During America’s Wars apart. This sections features primary source documents, which include doctors’ reports, patent information, and eyewitness accounts, just to name a few. Adding these primary-source documents to the chapters helps bring the conflict or war to life.

I looked at two other related sources. The first was Jack E. McCallum’s Military Medicine: From Ancient Times to the 21st Century (ABC-CLIO, 2008). This source is set up like an encyclopedia with all entries alphabetized. The entries also all end with a reference list. Topics are not grouped to a specific war or conflict like they are in Health Under Fire. So for example in McCallum’s work, “Hospital Trains” is listed between “Hospital Ships” and “Human Experimentation,” neither of which were important during the Civil War, where trains were discussed in Health Under Fire. This source would be helpful if you were just looking for one topic and you’re not necessarily looking at other topics regarding a particular war or conflict.

I also looked at Richard A. Gabriel’s Between Flesh and Steel: A History of Military Medicine from the Middle Ages to the War in Afghanistan (Potomac, 2013). This source is also set up chronologically, but by century. It looks at US armies, as well as British, Russian, French, and German armies. This source takes a broader look at the evolution of military medicine, as opposed to looking specifically at each conflict or war.

Between the sources I looked at, I really liked Health Under Fire: Medical Care During America’s Wars. The format was easy to use and organized in a clear manner. As mentioned earlier, the primary source documents really set this source apart from others. This book would be a welcomed addition to undergraduate libraries and medical school libraries.—Mina Cher Court, Head of Cataloging and Metadata, Grasselli Library and Breen Learning Center, John Carroll University, University Height, Ohio


Countless encyclopedic works have been published recently on Islam, some covering the subject broadly and