Save the Date!

Rethinking Resilience: Medicine and the First World War

Breda, Royal Dutch Military Academy, 23-10-2015

It is now 100 years ago that the First World War ravaged large parts of Europe. Medical care for injured soldiers was in its infancy and started to become organized with little scientific knowledge and many barriers and challenges. Much has changed in the way medical care is delivered, only to think about plastic surgery, rehabilitation medicine, and psychiatry. What was the life cycle of an injured soldier? How resilient were the structures that were built to support the mass casualties. What was the life cycle of a soldier? The symposium Rethinking Resilience provides a way to look at the medical care from the First World War perspective. Can this war inform us today to help organize medical care? Rethinking Resilience: Medicine and the First World War, offers new perspectives from experts in military history and medicine.

Dr. Leo van Bergen

Prof. dr. Col. Eric Vermetten
Although the second world war has left an imprint in memory of many in the Netherlands, it was the war that preceded this war that has dominated many new developments, or at least: so it is often said. Modern warfare techniques used during World War I have led to a number of advancements in the medical field for authorities had to find new ways to deal with the overwhelming numbers of wounded and the terrible wounds that were inflicted by modern weapons. New fields of medicine opened up, and nursing expanded as women rushed to help, never expecting the nearly unbearable conditions that they found on the battlefields of the Great War. Everything imaginable was tried to keep soldiers physically and mentally fit for service, be it at the front or at the weapons factory, showing that the concept of ‘sustainable deployment’ is in itself not a modern invention. Disabled soldiers were given technologically advanced prostheses, making them an early equivalent of the six million dollar man. Soldiers not anymore able to meet the hardships of war, were given electric cures in order to make them more afraid of the hospital than they were of the front. Slightly contradictory to this, the conviction was that the war itself had nothing to do with psychological weakness. It was hereditary or inborn. At most the war itself was the spark who set the characterological weakness too light. Medical practice was highly determined by its war circumstances.

Nevertheless, after the war the phrase that the war had been good for medicine became widespread and generally accepted. Because of the war many, soldiers and civilians alike, would be saved from long-time illness and early death.

This raises several questions: how did WW1 shape our conception of resilience; how did science contribute to military medicine, nursing, rehabilitation and psychiatry; which advancement of the Great War have been pivotal for medicine; what were the ‘real’ cures; how did the war have its effects outside its medical boundaries; what was the opinion of doctors (and patients) while the war raged? Finding answers to these historical questions could have its benefits for answering certain questions raised nowadays on the boundaries of soldiers’ health without (too much) endangering medicine’s integrity.

We will and cannot pretend to give all the answers to questions like these on this day. But we certainly think it could be a valuable contribution to the discussion.
Chairs: Dr. Leo van Bergen and Prof. dr. Col. Eric Vermetten

9.30 Opening Symposium: Surgeon General Johan de Graaf (TBC)

9.45: Opening Key Note
Drs. Gielt Algra: On the importance of history for military medicine
Veterans Institute, the Netherlands

10.00-11.00 Part 1: Mental Health
Major drs. Erik de Soir: The French treatment of war neuroses
Koninklijk Hoger Instituut voor Defensie, Belgium
Prof. dr. Christine van Everbroeck: Belgium and the soldiers suffering from ‘d’n klop’
Royal Museum of the Army and History of War, Belgium

11.15 – 12.15 Part 2: Disability
Dr. Julie Anderson: The medical care for the British disabled
University of Kent, United Kingdom
Dr. Ana Carden-Coyne: World War I and the body
University of Manchester, United Kingdom

12.15 – 12.30: Prof. dr. Desiree Verweij: synthesis part 1 and 2

12:30-13:30 Lunch

13:30-14.30 Part 3: Care for Combat Casualties
Prof. dr. Christine Hallett: The British nurses on the Eastern Mediterranean front
University of Manchester, United Kingdom
Dr. Kerry Neale: On the disfigured (life video contribution)
Australian War Memorial, Australia

14.45-16.15 Part 4: Military medicine, a bird’s view
Dr. Leo van Bergen: The alleged goodness of war for medicine. The Dutch example
Independent researcher
Pieter Trogh: Military medical dilemma’s
In Flanders Fields Museum, Belgium
Joost Pollmann: The Art of Gore. Drawing doctors, nurses and their patients in the Great War (video contribution)

*Comic book critic. Independent researcher*

16.15-16.30: Summary Col. Wynand Korterink
16.30-16.45: Closing remarks: Prof. dr. Col. Eric Vermetten
Faculty:
Drs. Gielt Algra, Veterans Institute, Doorn, the Netherlands
Dr. Julie Anderson, University of Kent, Kent, United Kingdom
Dr. Leo van Bergen, Independent researcher, Nijmegen, The Netherlands
Dr. Ana Carden-Coyne, University of Manchester, Manchester, United Kingdom
Dr. Christine van Everbroeck, Royal Museum of the Army and History of War, Brussels, Belgium
Prof. dr. Christine Hallett, University of Manchester, Manchester, United Kingdom
Prof. dr. Edgar Jones, King’s College London, London, United Kingdom
Col. Wynand Korterink, Staff Military Medicine, Utrecht, the Netherlands
Dr. Kerry Neale, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australia
Erik de Soir, Koninklijk Hoger Instituut voor Defensie, Belgium
Pieter Trogh, In Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres, Belgium
Joost Pollmann, Independent comic book researcher, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Prof. dr. Col. Eric Vermetten, Military Mental Health/Leiden University, Utrecht, the Netherlands
Prof. dr. Desiree Verweij, Royal Dutch Military Academy, Breda, the Netherlands

Entry: free

Registration
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Registration sincerely recommended.

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