



# Working in War Zones

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# CANADIAN FORCES HEALTH SERVICE

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**AUSMED Physicians  
One year after president shot  
down**

**Nine months after war  
Still so much unexploded  
mines and grenades –  
Childrens' play toys**

**Surgical and Medical Team  
Looking after UN forces  
Humanitarian Services to  
Local Orphanages**

**Kigali 1995**



In 1997 it was off to Haiti to work as the internist with the US Support group in Port aux Prince.

We again provide humanitarian care, often.

**Canadian Contingent with the US Support Group Haiti 1997**



## **Orphanage in Port au Prince, Haiti**

*In collaboration with Mother Teresa's sisters of Charity who do amazing work!!*

*Tuesday afternoons – 3 or 4 hours doing clinical rounds in the orphanage with these sisters. Despite little or no formal medical training, they ran the equivalent of a neonatal/pediatric ICU - where they provided miraculous care.*

*I was humbled by their dedication, innovation and effectiveness.*



Surgical Clinic  
Saturday Mornings  
Cit  Soleil

Very busy clinic run by Sisters  
of Charity.

Lazarus child...

# Watch List 2024

Crisis Group's early-warning Watch List identifies ten countries and regions facing deadly conflict or escalation of violence. In these situations, early action, driven or supported by the EU and its member states, could generate stronger prospects for peace. The Watch List 2024 includes a President's Take and detailed conflict analyses on Afghanistan, Egypt, Guatemala, Israel/Palestine, Kosovo/Serbia, Sahel, Somalia, Philippines, Ukraine and Venezuela.



As of Jan 2024:

- headline conflicts of 2023 rage in Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan;
- the Middle East is inching ever closer toward regional conflagration;
- little suggests that long-running conflicts from the Sahel to Myanmar are anywhere near abating.

2024 also promises change and uncertainty, with national elections in 64 countries, some of which could have enormous geopolitical consequence. Perhaps foremost among these is the election in the United States.



# Responsibility for comprehensive care of military members

- BEFORE
- DURING
- AFTER

# Responsibility for care of military members

## **BEFORE**

- Optimize preventive measures – occupational pre travel assessment
  - Need to keep in mind what each of members going to do in theatre
    - May be restrictions on what meds they can take

# Responsibility for care of military members

## **BEFORE**

- Preventive Medicine Section – stratify risks and provide guidance (orders) to mitigate that risk
- Prep with plan for health maintenance – management of injuries and illness

**Living conditions – sometimes you are lucky – inside the wire**



Then there are those “outside the wire”  
The ones living and sleeping in the dirt  
Those living and working at the pointy end



# Responsibility for care of military members

## **DURING**

- Provide safe food and water and sanitation
  - Real challenge for those who are living outside of compound
- Security

# Responsibility for care of military members

## **DURING**

- Provide first aid
- Provide life saving medical care
  - With plans as to level of care in theatre and when and where to transfer
- Should have debriefing and support as needed in theatre

# Responsibility for care of military members

## AFTER

- Many things from in theatre exposures may be incubating
  - Malaria
  - Leishmaniasis
  - Wound infections
- Need to anticipate what may happen on return



# Responsibility for care of military members

## AFTER

- Should have ongoing access to debriefing and support as needed in theatre
  - Many missions with gradual re-orientation to "real life"
  - However, it does delay time to returning home
    - Frustration for military members as well as those waiting at home
- Cannot underestimate risk of PTSD, need for ongoing support
  - Even those with great coping mechanisms and resilience can be broken down by repeated stressful missions

## Children in Conflict Zones

Lt Col AN Prasad\*, Brig PL Prasad<sup>+</sup>

### Abstract

The nature of war has changed dramatically. Today's conflicts happen where people live and they take a brutal toll on children. Heavy bombardment and destruction in war creates a humanitarian crisis where there is lack of adequate food, clean water and medicine. The consequences of war can have major impact on the health of children for years to come. Traumatic events can have a profound and lasting impact on the emotional, cognitive, behavioral and physiological functioning of an individual. Depending on the circumstances, the psychosocial impacts of disasters can range from mild stress reactions to problems such as anxiety, depression, substance abuse and post traumatic stress disorders (PTSD).

MJAFI 2009; 65 : 166-169

Key Words : Conflict zone; Children; Child health; Street children

First World War, civilians accounted for 5 percent of casualties.

Second World War the figure rose to 48 per cent.

2009, up to 90 per cent of casualties are civilians - an increasing number of these are women and children

# Clinical examples



37 year old soldier Afghanistan Aug 2006-Feb 2007  
Mid January 3 small papules on her forehead  
Blistered, became pruritic, increasing size

In Afghanistan on patrol - routinely sleeping outside

No bed nets, minimal PPM/insect precautions

Sleeping on mattress in sleeping bag - very close to ground

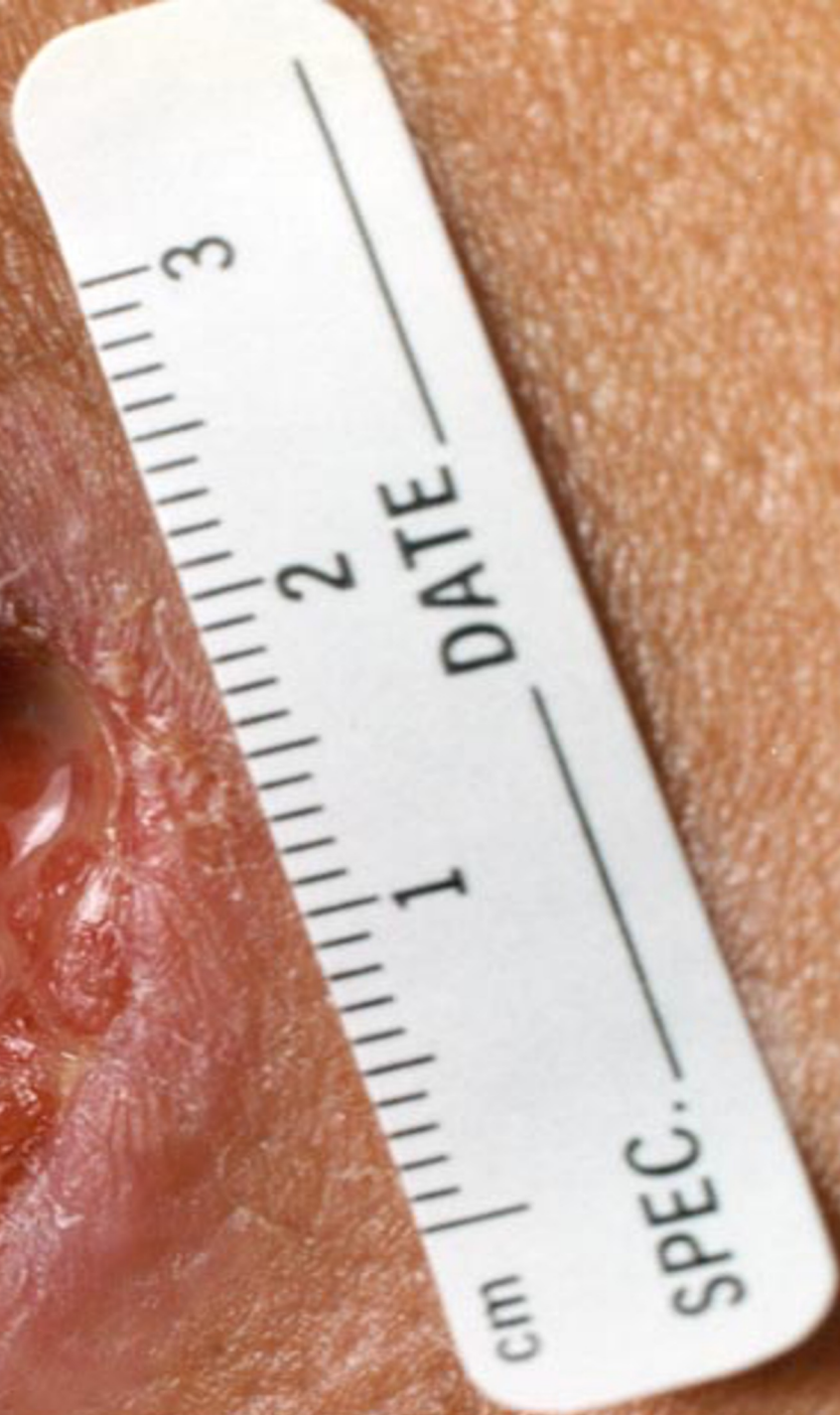
During daytime - always wearing headdress



Pathological diagnosis cutaneous leishmania –  
lot of giemsa stained organisms in histiocytes

Initial - delayed treatment due to career course  
Stibogluconate - limited response - pancreatitis  
Lipid ampho B - poorly tolerated - excellent results

Is this the same thing?  
If not – why not?



Soft tissue infection with  
MSSA, rapid response to  
oral therapy.



# In summary

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- Preparation for military members going into conflict involves a lot of steps routine used in travel medicine consults
- Need to provide guidance for large variety of individuals, jobs, resources
- Try to anticipate every possibility of care needed, full plan for stabilization and movement to higher level of care
- Responsible for pre, during and post deployment
  - On return may be living in areas without the knowledge or capability to look after more exotic diseases.





