

# The Military and Academic Dermatology

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Three military dermatology residency programs presently exist in the United States, each of which is outstanding: the National Capital Consortium consisting of the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, and the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC; the San Antonio Uniformed Services Health Education Consortium in San Antonio, Texas, consisting of a combined Air Force and Army medical center effort; and the Naval Medical Center in San Diego, California. Each facility has its roots in the years following World War II, when an appreciation of the importance of managing skin diseases to maintain the fighting strength of US troops was in clear focus. At that time, the men and women in combat were served by only 140 dermatologists. To address the needs of these soldiers, the US Department of Defense asked Drs. Clarence Livingood, Donald Pillsbury, and Marion Sulzberger to author a manual to outline the basics of skin diseases and their treatments for the medical generalists serving troops on the front lines. The classic book *Manual of Dermatology*<sup>1</sup> resulted. The delivery of this book to all physicians on active military duty, as well as to all dermatologists in the United States, led to an appreciation of the medical education of military dermatologists. The 3 authors, all of whom had lifelong ties with the military, had an immeasurable impact on the practice of dermatology in the United States. The book elevated Dr. Livingood to national acclaim, where he stayed for the following 50 years. He became the first consultant to the Surgeon General,

the Chairman of the Department of Dermatology at Henry Ford Hospital in Michigan, and the man many dermatologists came to view as synonymous with the American Board of Dermatology. Dr. Pillsbury, a retired Army Colonel, became Chairman of the Dermatology Department at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and is credited with fostering research efforts to better understand skin diseases. Dr. Sulzberger, who served in both World War I and II, is known as the "Father of American Dermatology."

With the advent of the Vietnam era and the rapid expansion of the military, many young physicians were pressed into active duty. Many future masters of our specialty spent some of their formative years serving the military and forging lifelong academic collaborations. Initial or continued contact with academic centers allowed other physicians to see role models for future careers. Research efforts to understand the effects of chemical warfare, the environment, and common diseases exacerbated by wet, humid climates elevated already established careers or spawned future investigative careers. In addition to Dr. Sulzberger, Drs. Rudy Baer, Earl Jones, Isaac Willis, Mark Dahl, Walter Larsen, Bill Jordan, Steve Webster, Tom Fitzpatrick, and Steve Katz among others helped to advance the understanding of militarily relevant diseases through their investigations at the Walter Reed and Letterman Army medical centers. Drs. Harvey Blank and David Taplin toured Vietnam, and their work led to the publication of another standard in military medicine, *Skin Diseases in Vietnam*.<sup>2</sup>

The Armed Forces Institute of Pathology has had a long distinguished history of training many dermatopathologists who gained national importance. The 3 most recent Chairmen of Dermatopathology, Elson Helwig, James Graham, and George Lupton (who currently serves) have been leading figures in discovering, teaching, and publishing in this arena. Their trainees are well represented within academic departments across the country. These

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3 men have helped to teach a generation of dermatologists through their writing, research, and spoken presentations.

Others associated with the military residency programs went on to careers in the Armed Forces that were characterized by education and leadership followed by civilian academic careers. These physicians include Drs. Richard Odom, Timothy Berger, Waive and Bernie Johnson, Ben Smith, Charlie Lewis, Jack Aeling, George Lupton, Stu Salasche, Ramsey Mellete, Dirk Elston, Sam Moschella, Jim Fitzpatrick, Jim Keeling, Dick Spielvogel, Ronald Grimwood, Terry Barrett, Eric Krause, Rudy Roth, OG Rodman, and Bill James, among many others. Many of these physicians helped to coauthor books, such as Drs. Fitzpatrick and Aeling's *Dermatology Secrets in Color*,<sup>3</sup> Dr. Johnson's *Ethnic Skin*,<sup>4</sup> Dr. Moschella's *Dermatology*,<sup>5</sup> and Drs. Odom, James, and Berger's *Andrews' Diseases of the Skin*.<sup>6</sup> In 1994, Dr. James edited *The Textbook of Military Dermatology*,<sup>7</sup> which was commissioned by the Office of the Surgeon General to be an update of the influential *Manual of Dermatology* discussed above. This 20-chapter textbook, coauthored by 23 active duty academicians, is a unique resource. It addresses environmental hazards such as frostbite and trench foot and external toxins such as nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare insults to the skin—information not available in most dermatology textbooks. Additionally, a historical overview of the impact of skin disease on warfare is included in each chapter. Drs. James and Elston are coeditors of *Emedicine Online*

*Textbook of Dermatology*.<sup>8</sup> This free online textbook of more than 700 chapters serves physicians all over the world who do not have access to current library sources.

There are many wonderful institutions of learning that have propelled dermatology practices in the United States forward over the years. Each could easily cite seminal discoveries, contributions to the literature, and educational impact. However, in the short history of military dermatology, uniformed physicians have played an active, vital role in academic medicine and it is with great pleasure and pride that I highlight some of their contributions.

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