

Preface

I would say that two contrary laws seem to be wrestling with each other nowadays: the one, a law of blood and death, ever imagining new means of destruction and forcing nations to be constantly ready for the battlefield—the other a law of peace, work, and health ever evolving new means of delivering man from the scourges which beset him. Which of these two laws will ultimately prevail God alone knows

—Louis Pasteur

Of the thousands of years of human history, few have been free of some type of war. The destructive lessons that warriors learn on the battlefield manage to be *into the next* have fallen, empires have rotted from within, and primitivism has cyclically triumphed over artifice, yet weapons technology has never regressed. For **better or worse, the characterization of man as a maker of weapons seems to** have been consistently borne out.

Unfortunately, the concurrent lessons of war—those that are lifesaving rather than life-destroying—are often forgotten from one conflict to the next. Time after time, medical innovations that affect the management of injuries, the logistics of evacuation, and the operation of far-forward medical facilities are allowed to become irrelevant as soon as a conflict is over.

The recent buildup of forces in the Middle East has reaffirmed the need for a highly trained medical corps that is able to deploy rapidly to any area of the world. Under such conditions, medical personnel will not have the time to **learn combat-unique management techniques at their leisure, and civilian** surgical manuals will not be adequate reference tools. This volume of the *Textbook of Military Medicine* deals with conventional warfare and addresses in detail conventional weapons, their effects, and the treatment of the casualties that they generate. It reviews the historical significance of these injuries and explains the basic scientific principles underlying the injuring mechanisms so that the medical officer will have a fundamental understanding of the injuries they are called upon to treat.

Colonel Russ Zajtchuk
U.S. Army

December 1990
Washington, D.C.

The current medical system to support the U.S. Army at war is a continuum from the forward line of troops through the continental **United States; it serves as a primary source of** during the early stages of a major conflict. The system is designed to optimize the return to duty of the maximum number of trained combat soldiers at the lowest possible level. Far-forward stabilization helps to maintain the physiology of injured soldiers who are unlikely to return to duty and allows for their rapid evacuation from the battlefield without needless sacrifice of life or function.
