

Fort Scott National Historic Site

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Civil War Medicine Teacher's Guide

Civil War Medicine

Introduction

Most of us today would not want to go the hospital if we could help it, because we associate hospitals with sickness and injury. However, because these two conditions occur with a great degree of regularity, hospitals often become a necessity to help us recover. During the Civil War, soldiers and civilians attached similar meanings to hospitals—a place of suffering, yes, but also a place of healing and recovery.

The hospital at Fort Scott treated Union soldiers (and at times—civilians and Confederate soldiers) from throughout the region. After initial treatment on the battlefield, soldiers were sent to Fort Scott for more specialized care and recovery. The sick list of patients at Fort Scott frequently exceeded 500. The hospital complex during the Civil War included an 1840s hospital building, a former infantry barracks, and a former guardhouse.

Despite horrific fighting in the area, there were consistently about twice as many ill soldiers in the hospital as there were wounded ones. Poor sanitary conditions and lack of understanding of what caused disease greatly increased the casualty rate during the Civil War. About 300,000 Union soldiers died during the Civil War, but only a third were combat fatalities.

In this lesson, your class will learn about the role that Fort Scott played in providing care to the sick and wounded during the war, will discover aspects of medical treatment of the time and will compare those aspects to modern treatment methods.

Saws and Scalpels: Civil War Medicine at Fort Scott

Lesson Plan

Pre-program lesson: Complete the following lesson prior to the distance learning program.

Grade level: 6-8

Time Requirements: One class period

Materials:

- “Civil War Medicine” worksheet
- Civil War Hospital traveling trunk *OR* photographs of the items in the traveling trunk
- Timer (a stopwatch or second hand on a clock will work)

Primary Sources:

Hospital tools, medications, hospital records.

Kansas Curricular Standards:

Kansas, United States, and World History: The student uses a working knowledge and understanding of significant individuals, groups, ideas, events, eras, and developments in the history of Kansas, the United States, and the world, utilizing essential analytical and research skills.

Benchmark 2: The student understands individuals, groups, ideas, events, and developments during Kansas territory and the Civil War (1854-1865).

Science as Inquiry: The student will develop the abilities to do scientific inquiry, be able to demonstrate how scientific inquiry is applied, and develop understandings about scientific inquiry.

Benchmark 1: The student will demonstrate abilities necessary to do the processes of scientific inquiry. (1.1.1), (1.1.3)

Benchmark 2: The student will apply different types of investigations to different types of questions. (1.2.1)

History and Nature of Science: The student will examine and develop an understanding of science as a historical human endeavor.

Benchmark 2: The student will research contributions to science throughout history. (7.2.1)

Skills:

1. Recognizing historical perspectives
2. Examining historical tools
3. Analyzing medical issues
4. Drawing conclusions
5. Using primary sources

Objectives: After completing the program, the student will be able to:

1. Explain why Fort Scott was a major military hospital facility during the Civil War.
2. Name and describe at least 3 health problems treated at Fort Scott and identify three common treatments.
3. Explain how sanitary conditions and medical practices of the time contributed to the casualty rate during the Civil War.

Procedure:

This lesson will be presented as part of a secondary-level distance learning program via video conference. A traveling trunk, student worksheets and preparation instructions will be provided to the classroom teacher in advance of the scheduled video conference. Power Point content will be added into the live video conference feed to enhance the program through graphics and images.

Pre-Visit Activity:

- Divide students into 8 groups in the classroom. Each group will be assigned a station within the classroom to examine a tool used in the hospital during the Civil War.
- Students will use the pre-visit “Civil War Medicine” worksheet to write down their observations.
- Each station will have items from the Civil War Hospital traveling trunk (or a printout of the item if the trunk is not used). Each station will be numbered (1 through 8)
- The students will have one minute at each station to touch and examine the items to try to determine what each one was used for in the hospital during the Civil War. “Students write their conclusions in the space provided for each numbered station (ex. item number 7 would go in box number 7 on their paper).
- After one minute the groups rotate to the next station, repeating the previous step until the students have visited every station.
- The teacher will then lead the class in a discussion to try to come to a conclusion about each item. During the video conference, the ranger will talk about each of these items.

Distance Learning Program Materials:

- Return the completed “Civil War Medicine” worksheet to students.
- Items from Civil War Hospital traveling trunk OR photographs of the items in the traveling trunk can be on display in the front of the classroom for the students to refer back to.
- Each student will receive a copy of the following handouts when the ranger asks for them to be passed out:
 - Common Medications Used During the Civil War
 - Diseases and Symptoms
 - Diagnosis and Treatments
 - Civil War Hospital Roster
- During the distance learning program, the ranger will give the students an assignment. The teacher determines student groupings, but pairs may work best. Please have the students properly grouped prior to the start of the program.

Extension:

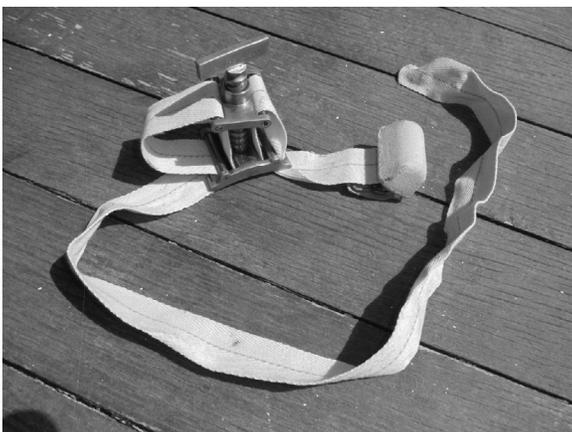
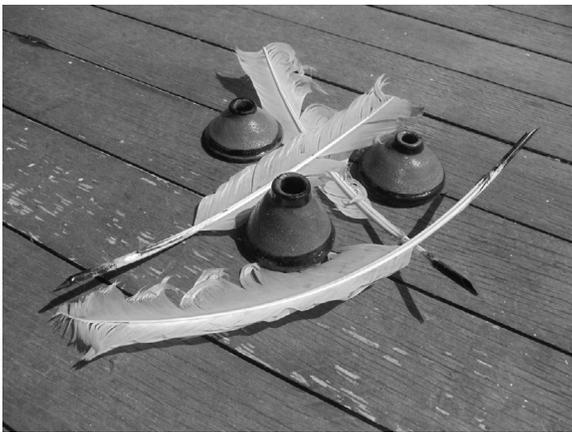
The class could review common Civil War-era diseases and how they were treated. Students could research these diseases and learn how doctors treat them today. The class could also look at the medications presented in the lesson and research if any are still used. If so, students could tell what conditions they are used to treat today. If not, students could explain why they are no longer used in the medical field.

Civil War Medicine

Traveling Trunk Worksheet

Think you would like to live back in the days of the Civil War? On the back of this sheet are pictures of some items that were used in the hospital at Fort Scott during the Civil War. These items are also in the trunk that accompanies this unit. (Trunk optional at teacher's discretion) Examine each of the items. When you think you know what the items were used for write your thoughts in the appropriate box below.

1	2
3	4
5	6
7	8



Common Medications Used During the Civil War

Handout

- Alcohol – stimulant or to induce blistering.
- Spirits of ammonia – inhaled as a stimulant.
- Cough mixture – used for coughs, contained glycerine, vinegar, herbs, gum arabic, and whisky.
- Chloroform – used sparingly, would cause vomiting.
- Ether – anesthetic, smelled bad and slow acting.
- Ipecac – stimulated vomiting.
- Lead Acetate – used to treat dysentery.
- Opium and Morphine – relieved pain and relaxed muscles.
- Quinine – used to ease fevers, only effective on malaria.
- Sodium chlorate – used to cool the skin. Taken internally as a diuretic.
- Creosote – helped stop bleeding and destroyed infected tissue.
- Black Tea – stimulant to soothe abdominal discomfort.
- Glycerine – used to soothe skin and was in cough syrup.

Diseases and Symptoms

Handout

Diseases

Symptoms

Dysentery (Dis-in-TARE-ee):

Stomach pain, nausea, vomiting and bloody stools

Remittent Fever:

Fever fluctuates, but never reaches normal – this type of fever was common with typhoid or malaria

Pneumonia:

Rapid breathing, hot and cold (chills), cough, mucus and chest pain

Intermittent Fever:

This type of fever follows regular pattern alternating with a return to normal temperature

Cholera (CALL-uhr-uh):

Muscle cramps, diarrhea and vomiting

Diarrhea:

Stomach pain, vomiting, nausea and loose, watery stools

Consumption (Tuberculosis):

Muscle pain, weakness, night sweats, chest pain, cough and general wasting away

Typhoid (TIE-foyd):

Headache, dry skin, aching muscles, hot, flushed face, very weak, reddened eyes, sleepy, loose stool and fever

Malaria (muh-LAIR-ee-uh):

Chills, fever, sweating, delirium, nausea and vomiting

Bronchitis:

Fever, chest pain, cough, mucus and trouble breathing

Diagnosis and Treatments

Worksheet

Below are actual cases of patients at the Fort Scott hospital during the Civil War. You will be the doctor and come up with a diagnosis and treatment for each of them.

1. Private James Armstrong of Company D/2nd Kansas Colored Infantry was admitted on October 29, 1863 with cold chills, cough, mucus, and rapid breathing.
 - a. Diagnosis:
 - b. Treatment:
2. Private Ira Allen of Company I/3rd Wisconsin Cavalry came to the hospital on October 30, 1863 with nausea, vomiting and bloody stools, and stomach pain.
 - a. Diagnosis:
 - b. Treatment:
3. Private Alexander Anderson of Company D/2nd Kansas Cavalry was admitted to the hospital on February 28, 1864 with a fever that would come and go on a regular pattern.
 - a. Diagnosis:
 - b. Treatment:
4. Private David Snow was admitted on July 25, 1863 with trouble breathing, cough, mucus, chest pain, and a fever.
 - a. Diagnosis:
 - b. Treatment:
5. Private Alexander Atchinson of Company G/6th Kansas Cavalry was admitted on December 23, 1862 after being wounded by a poison arrow.
 - a. Diagnosis:
 - b. Treatment:
6. Sergeant Thomas Sanders of Company G/5th Kansas Cavalry came to the hospital complaining about stomach pain, vomiting, nausea and loose, watery stools.
 - a. Diagnosis:
 - b. Treatment:

Civil War Hospital Roster

Fort Scott, KS

Handout

Allen, George E. [ID#1853]: Private (Pvt.) in Company (Co.) B, 3rd Wisconsin (Wis.) Cavalry (Cav). Age 24. Admitted 2 Oct 1863 with gunshot wound of left forearm from a revolver (conical ball). In Ward 1, Bed 10. Treatment = simple dressing with p???tion and compression without splint. Returned to duty (RTD) 19 Mar 1864.

Allen, Ira [ID#1855]: Pvt. in Co. I, 3rd Wis. Cav. Admitted 30 Oct 1863 from field hospital with dysentery. In Ward 5, Bed 15. Transferred to Madison, Wis. 23 Mar 1864.

Allen, Oscar [ID#1851]: Pvt. in Co. F, 3rd Wis. Cav. Admitted 19 Aug 1863 with intermittent fever. RTD 25 Aug 1863.

Amey, George [ID#1136]: Pvt. in Co. E, 6th Kansas (Ks) Cav. Appears on Dec 1862 register of sick & wounded with pneumonia. RTD 30 Dec 1862.

Anderson, Alexander B. [ID#1864]: Pvt. in Co. D, 2nd Ks Cav. Admitted from the field 28 Feb 1864 with intermittent fever. In Ward 6, Bed 1. RTD 28 Mar 1864.

Armstrong, James [ID#1860]: Pvt. in Co. D, 2nd Ks Colored Infantry. Admitted 29 Oct 1863 from field with pneumonia. Died 13 Jun 1864 from chronic peritonitis [an infection of the abdominal membrane].

Atchinson, Alexander (or Albert) [ID#1217]: Pvt. in Co. G, 6th Ks Cav, admitted 23 Dec 1862 after being wounded by a poisoned arrow. Sent to Army General Hospital at Fort Leavenworth, Ks, on 19 Mar 1863.

Sammers, Thomas: Sergeant in Co. G, 5th Ks Cav. Admitted 13 Jul 1863 with diarrhea. RTD 14 Jul 1863.

Snow, David. Pvt. in Right Section, Blair's Battery [Artillery]. Admitted 25 Jul 1863 with bronchitis.