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HOSPITAL BASE OF THE NORTH CAUCASUS DURING GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR (1941–1945)

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Abstract

The Great Patriotic War, which began on June 22, 1941, required the government to organize a system for the treatment of sick and wounded soldiers. The beginning of the war made special demands to medical facilities and medical workers. This was reasoned by two critical circumstances. First of all, the fact that wars are accompanied by epidemics, and in order to prevent them, extensive preventive sanitary and anti-epidemiological work is required, which is complicated by the lack of medical personnel and medicines. During the war, there are a lot of wounded who need to be treated, and for this it is necessary to deploy a large number of hospitals not only in the army, but also in the rear area, where they are transported with the most serious injuries that require hospital treatment. The Council of People's Commissars of the USSR already at the end of June 1941 adopted the resolution on the deployment of hospitals in the country on the basis of health centers, hospitals, educational institutions and other premises. A significant role was given to the North Caucasus, where there was a good resort base, trained medical workers and equipment. Here, there were all the opportunities to deploy quickly a wide network of hospitals and provide qualified help to the wounded and ill. During the four years of the war, more than 6,000 hospital facilities were formed, including 2,990 evacuation hospitals with 1 million 340 thousand beds in the rear areas of the country.

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Keywords: World War II, North Caucasus, hospitals, health centers, resorts.



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1. Introduction

From the first days of World War II, millions of fighters and commanders of the Red Army took part in battles with German invaders. Many of them were injured during combat clashes with the enemies. Since the end of June 1941, the deployment of hospital facilities to treat wounded and ill military personnel in the rear areas of the USSR had begun. The formation of a wide network of evacuation hospitals took place during all four years of the war. However, as it was evidenced by the numbers, their main amount (76%) was created in 1941. Thus, by the beginning of August, 1,500 evacuation hospitals with 658 thousand beds were formed and sponsored by the People's Commissariat of Health and the People's Commissariat of Defense, and another 215 evacuation hospitals with 80 thousand beds were formed and sponsored by All-Union Central Trade Union Council (Ivanov, 1985). It is necessary to note that until the middle of November 1942, when the Soviet troops conducted mainly defensive battles, the front and army hospitals faced great difficulties in the provision of effective and high-quality treatment of wounded. These difficulties were caused by the need for frequent changes in the locations of military hospitals and their overload due to the large number of wounded who came daily from the front line. Therefore, the main burden in the treatment of the wounded was during the first period of World War II in the hospital base of the rear areas of the country (Smirnov, 1976).

2. Problem Statement

During the Great Patriotic War, the treatment and medical care of wounded and ill soldiers of the Red Army was carried out throughout the Soviet Union. However, the various rear areas of the country were unequal in their capabilities. The North Caucasus belonged to those regions where the creation of a hospital base was extremely relevant. Firstly, a significant hospital bed network with 37.3 thousand beds was created here even before the war (Smirnov, 1976). Secondly, in this region there was an extensive network of resort institutions equipped with modern equipment and special tools. The world-famous resort areas of the Caucasian Mineral Waters in the Stavropol Territory and Sochi-Matsesta on the Black Sea coast of the Krasnodar Territory had especially favorable opportunities for mass treatment of wounded people. By the beginning of the war, only in Kislovodsk, Pyatigorsk, Essentuki, Zheleznovodsk and Sochi, there were a total of 159 large health centers, boarding houses and rest houses with 24950 beds. Thirdly, unlike other rear areas of the country, medical workers could use favorable balneotherapeutic and climatic factors during the treatment process: mineral waters, healing mud, healing mountain air, etc. Their active use significantly improved the quality of treatment for the wounded and ill warriors and significantly reduced the time of their treatment.

3. Research Questions

By the beginning of World War II, a powerful spa-resort base functioned in the resort cities of the North Caucasus. Only Caucasian Mineral Waters amounted to 107 health centers with 18.9 thousand beds. In terms of its material, technical and personnel support, it was considered the most advanced in the Soviet Union along with the resort base of Sochi-Matsesta. In Kislovodsk, which was the largest resort of Caucasian Mineral Waters, there were 53 health centers for 9608 places, in Yessentuki there were 26

health centers with 4991 places, in Zheleznovodsk – 16 health centers with 2189 places and in Pyatigorsk – 12 health centers with 2090 places. The annual turnover of the base of health centers of all four cities of the Caucasian Mineral Waters was 142.5 thousand people who rested and improved their health (Stavropol Territory for 50 years, 1968).

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research was to show the functions of hospitals, health centers and resorts in the North Caucasus in the provision of assistance to wounded soldiers in the first year of World War II.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis was presented by the principles of objectivity, scientific component and historicism, implying the study of facts and phenomena in all their diversity, in the concrete historical conditions of their occurrence and development, which allow highlighting both the positive and negative sides of the studied problem. The work was based on an integrated research approach. The methods of objective historical comparison and comparative analysis were used.

6. Findings

The day before the Great Patriotic War in the North Caucasus in the Caucasian Mineral Waters, Sochi, Anapa, Nalchik, Grozny and a number of other places, a developed system of resorts was formed. Thus, 110 health centers with almost 20 thousand beds functioned in Caucasian Mineral Waters. There, 146 thousand people improved their health over the year. In Kislovodsk, in 53 health centers with 9608 places, 74 thousand people were treated, in Essentuki in 26 health centers with 4991 places 39, 3 thousand people were treated, in 12 health centers of Pyatigorsk with 2090 places – 15 thousand people and in 16 health centers of Zheleznovodsk for 2189 places – 14.2 thousand people (Stavropol Territory for 50 years, 1968).

In accordance with the decision of the government, the Stavropol Territory Executive Committee on July 12 adopted a resolution on the equipment of hospitals with 31325 beds, including 17840 at the expense of health centers and rest houses.

From the very beginning of the work of hospitals, they were specialized according to the types of military injuries, which made it possible to place correctly and use medical personnel, as well as differentially organize treatment. In order to render specialized assistance, advisory bureaus were organized with different specialists – doctors working there. Scientific and resort councils were organized, at the plenums of which lectures and reports on surgical and hospital topics were presented. Similar work was carried out in the republics of the North Caucasus and the Krasnodar Territory (Sudavtsov, 2005).

The work on assistance to hospitals in Chechen-Ingushetia was guided by a special committee created at the regional committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks on November 10, 1941. Military hospitals were located in the most comfortable premises of Grozny, in the resort

“Sernovodsk” and in a rest house in Chishki. Qualified medical and service personnel worked there and the best equipment, inventory and furniture were allocated (Abazatov, 1973).

The first ambulance trains began to arrive at hospitals in early August. On August 9, long before the ambulance train arrived at the Essentuki station, in addition to hospital workers, many residents of the city and the village of Essentuki arrived. All the wounded leaving the wagons were given flowers and fruits; all stretchers were filled with flowers and fruits. People did not allow loading stretchers with wounded into cars, but they themselves carried them to the sanitary pass.

The beginning of the work of hospitals showed the need for a unified management, regardless of the departmental affiliation of health centers. For this purpose on September 3, 1941, the Stavropol Territory Executive Committee adopted a resolution “On the management of hospitals in the cities of Caucasian Mineral Waters”. In order to approximate the management and control of the activities of the evacuation hospitals of the People's Commissariat of Public Health and other departments of Kislovodsk, Essentuki, Pyatigorsk, Zheleznovodsk, the regional health department was allowed territorially attaching them to the resort departments of the People's Commissariat of Public Health, naming them “Office of the authorized regional health departments”. For the steady operation of the evacuation hospitals, a lot of activities were needed to clearly organize the meeting of ambulance trains, quickly unload wounded people and transport them to hospitals (Gatsenko, 1971). The head of evacuation hospitals met every sanitary train, the head, the hospital's political officer and the representative of care taking personnel came from each hospital. Timely primary sanitary and surgical treatment of wounded persons, the organization of daily comprehensive treatment and the organization of discharge to evacuation in rear areas was carried out in hospitals. The organization of medical statistics and reports, health education and cultural mass work in evacuation hospitals was carried out.

The introduction of resort factors in the treatment of military-traumatic injuries. The Scientific Resort Council approved a methodology for military injuries treatment using balneotherapeutic factors of the resort and the widespread introduction of all hospitals into medical practice. The following activities were carried out in the mud clinic: first-aid rooms were made in each department, a physical therapy cabinet was organized, a mechanotherapy department was organized and a mechanic Zhornokleev designed devices for small joints of hands and feet, in addition to the equipment for large joints. The treatment method was as follows: one layer of gauze was applied to an open wound, and mud was applied to gauze with a thick layer, then it was wrapped in a tent. After the mud was washed away, a wounded person was bandaged up and went to take procedures in the room of physiotherapy exercises and then to the mechanotherapy department. The result was amazing: after 3–6 mud procedures, extensive festering wounds started to heal, they were covered with good granulation, wounds healed with a soft scar, and did not tighten limb. The use of mud immediately after the thermal procedure, and then with physiotherapy and mechanical therapy prevented the formation of contractures, which increased the percentage of wounded who were discharged, having restored full working capacity, that is, they again joined the ranks of the Soviet Army. Thus, up to 800 wounded were discharged. The sooner, the balneotherapeutic factors were applied after the injury, the better the result was. First-aid rooms were also organized in the mineral baths; the wounded people took mineral baths after the mud treatment.

It is necessary to note the great work and assistance of senior students of all schools in the cities of Caucasian Mineral Waters, who often visited hospitals, gave concerts, read books and wrote letters to wounded people. On the basis of the resort's heavy department in a health center, a surgical base was organized where a surgical unit was equipped before the war. Later in health center No. 10 and Kalinin sanatorium, a surgical base was organized, where the wounded with serious wounds and requiring complex and urgent operations were concentrated. Initially, Dr. Dobroserdov and Dr. Zelesky from Rostov were the leading surgeons of the hospital base. They had to continuously operate for days in the first week of hospital execution.

The editorial office of the Grozny Worker newspaper received many letters from hospitals. The wounded responded highly of the children who visited the hospital. Thus, foreman A. Lushchenko wrote: "All patients of the twentieth room of our hospital told me: "You, comrade foreman, describe in details this little first-grader. Give him our father's greetings through the newspaper and wish him the best". Fulfilling the will of the fighters, I want to thank Sasha Chernikov, a first-grade student of school No. 2. He read various military stories so well that he touched our hearts. With the participation of our little bosses, we had a very good holiday" (Abazatov, 1973).

Первые раненые стали поступать в госпитали уже в начале августа. И поток их непрерывно увеличивался. The work of scientific research in hospitals and a wide scientific and practical conference. When balneotherapeutic factors were introduced into practice of the treatment of military injuries, the scientific resort hospital council developed a technique for scientific work in hospitals for the comprehensive treatment of military injuries. In the first days of July 1948, a scientific and practical conference on the treatment of military injuries was held in the mud clinic. 25 reports were presented here. The conference was attended by surgeons of the front and the main sanitary department.

The conference gave a lot of experience. The prescribed treatment methods and results formed the basis for the treatment of military injuries during the war and in the post-war period. Unfortunately, the proceedings of the conference were lost during the occupation.

The hospitals carried out timely sanitary and surgical primary treatment of wounded people, the organization of daily comprehensive treatment, the organization of discharge to the evacuation in the hospitals of deep rear areas. Among hospitals operating in the North Caucasus, local evacuation centers or LECs with a location in Krasnodar, Kropotkin, Stavropol and the resorts of Caucasian Mineral Waters played a special role. As the fighting on the fronts intensified and the resistance of Soviet troops to the enemy increased, the flow of wounded to Caucasian Mineral Waters increased sharply, and the work of hospitals became more intense. Doctors, nurses and hospital attendants did not leave the operating tables and beds for severely wounded for days, doing real miracles. According to official statistics, more than 80 % of the wounded who were cured in the hospitals of Caucasian Mineral Waters were returned to duty. This was much higher than the all-Union indicator, which in itself was also high and exceeded 70 %.

Such results never seen before in the history of military medical practice in Caucasian Mineral Waters were achieved not only by extraordinary care, the kindness of the hearts of all staff, timely and skillful surgical care, and a variety of medical treatment, but also by the application of the beneficial natural healing factors of the resorts. This was their beneficial position and clear advantage over other

hospitals in the country (Kopylova, 2007). Narzan, sulfate, radon baths and mud of the Tambukan lake, which was often put on open wounds, gave an unusually high therapeutic effect.

The hospital's nurse L.F. Medvedeva (Osipenko) recalled: "Our surgeon of evacuation hospital No. 2047 Gnilorybov came and said: "My boy is going to die on the table now, I need blood." And I walked, lay down next to a direct transfusion ... In 1944, nurse Pavlova and I were the first in the Stavropol Territory to receive certificates of donors of national importance ... " (Caucasian Health Resort, 1997). Thus, Melnikova became a donor in 1941, when her husband and brother went to the front. During the war she donated blood for the wounded defenders of the Motherland (Abazatov, 1973). The best donors were awarded the title "Honorary Donor of the USSR", including the donor of the Pyatigorsk blood transfusion station E.S. Pomiluiko, she donated 13 liters of blood from the beginning of the war until the end of 1943. In addition, her three adult daughters became donors too.

The performances of Matveeva, Kazakov, Skopil, Ushakov, Nilsky and others, the artists of the Pyatigorsk Theater of Musical Comedy, which during the war gave 200 performances and up to 1000 concerts during the war, were awarded with diplomas of the All-Union Committee for Arts Council of People's Commissars, Central Committee of the Union of Art Workers and the Military Chef Commission of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. Grozny Russian and Chechen-Ingush drama theaters, the republican song and dance ensemble, amateur art groups showed performances and gave concerts (Abazatov, 1973).

In mid-August 1942, Caucasian Mineral Waters were occupied by the Nazis. The fact that the Nazis wanted to use health centers for themselves was evidenced by the fact that they almost did not bomb resort towns. During the occupation of Caucasian Mineral Waters, health centers were used as rest houses and hospitals for members of the German army. A notable feat was performed by physicians and residents of resort towns during the occupation.

From the very beginning of the work of hospitals, they specialized in the types of military injuries, which made it possible to correctly place and use medical personnel, as well as perform treatment differentially.

Among hospitals operating in the North Caucasus, local evacuation centers or LECs with a location in Krasnodar, Kropotkin, Stavropol and the resorts of Caucasian Mineral Waters played a special role (Fedchenko, 2001).

The vast majority of them were hospitals for surgical patients. Therefore, the main percentage (89 %) of beds in hospitals of All-Union Central Trade Union Council was surgical beds. In addition to directly service to the needs of the front, the All-Union Central Trade Union Council hospitals served ill and wounded local garrisons, and provided medical assistance to the population, especially in rural areas.

7. Conclusion

Thus, the Soviet people showed paternal care for the defenders of the motherland and their families. The ill and wounded fighters and commanders of the Red Army were given special attention. The party-Soviet, public and economic organizations of the republics of the North Caucasus focused on good treatment and maintenance, nutrition and cultural rest, the mental condition of ill and wounded soldiers.

By the summer of 1942, the hospital base of the resort towns of the North Caucasus reached its maximum performance in the first year of the Great Patriotic War. Due to the use of various balneotherapeutic and natural-climatic factors, the doctors of the evacuation hospitals of Kislovodsk, Pyatigorsk, Grozny and others returned up to 80 % of all treated soldiers and commanders, which exceeded the all-Union indicators. However, the German occupation of the North Caucasus, which began in August 1942, led to a temporary drawdown of the hospital base.

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