

USAF MEDICAL CENTER WRIGHT PATTERSON

LINEAGE

U.S. Air Force Medical Center, Wright Patterson
Medical Center, Wright Patterson Air Force

STATIONS

Wright Patterson AFB, OH

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

Col Edgar L. Olson, Sep 1956-Sep 1957
BG J. W. Humphreys, Sep 1957-Aug 1960
Col Frank A. Perri, Aug 1960-Feb 1963
Col William C. Hernquist, Feb 1963-Jun 1966
Col Timothy N. Caris, Jun 1966-Jul 1966
Col John A. Hennesen, Jul 1966-Mar 1970
Col James L. Borders, Mar 1970-May 1970
Col Herrick M. Thomas, May 1970-Jul 1970
Col Donald N. Vivian, Jul 1970-Apr 1972
Col Harry T. Cerha, Apr 1972-Aug 1972
Col John R. Greene, Aug 1972-Jul 1973
BG Joseph E. Wesp, Jul 1973-Jul 1975
BG John J. Halki, Aug 1975-Apr 1979
BG Bealer T. Rogers, Jr., Apr 1979-Jul 1980
Col Emmett B. Ferguson, Jr., Jul 1980-Apr 1983
Col Lawrence R. Smith, Jun 1983

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

On July 1, 1958, the 2750th USAF Hospital was re-designated the United States Air Force Hospital, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. The hospital remained under the jurisdiction of the 2750th Air Base Wing.

The 2750th Air Base Wing also maintained responsibility for the base news publications. During the 1950s these house organs were The Post Script newspaper and Wingspread magazine. Wingspread began publication in September 1956. A commercial publication, it was supported by commercial advertising, and was planned to meet the publicity needs of not only the 2750th Air Base Wing, but all tenant organizations on base, and civilian as well as military employees. One of the many special events that received coverage in the 1950s was the 50th anniversary of powered flight, observed in December 1953.

October 15, 1953, the Hq 2750th Base Medical Group, as it was then known, was redesignated the 2750th United States Air Force Hospital. Construction of the hospital was completed in June 1956, at a cost of just over \$5 million.

The USAF Hospital, WPAFB, was reassigned from 2750th ABW jurisdiction to Hq Air Materiel Command (later AFLC) effective January 1, 1961. The hospital was assigned its current designation as the USAF Medical Center Wright-Patterson, on July 1, 1969.

The first Medical Department personnel, one officer and three enlisted men, arrived at Wilbur Wright Field on July 8, 1917. A converted barrack was set up as a temporary infirmary. By August 21, 1917, the first hospital building was completed. Despite unsanitary conditions, good health prevailed among post personnel during that first brutal winter at Wilbur Wright Field. On May 1, 1918, the medical staff consisted of 14 physicians and dentists, 63 enlisted men, and 11 commissioned nurses.

For the period from 1918 to 1942, few details are available on hospital personnel or the valuable services they performed. Two permanent hospital facilities, however, were put in service in 1942. A fifty-bed hospital was activated June 17, 1942 in what is now Building 219, Area C. It was followed on December 21, 1942, by the activation of a cantonment-type hospital facility in Wood City. This cantonment-type hospital remained the main Base Hospital for many years, its bed capacity varying according to the needs of the command.

In 1952, planning for the current hospital began. This Area A facility was designed as a 348-bed general hospital, and incorporated all of the latest hospital improvements. It was also designed to

allow for a 200-bed expansion, should the need arise, without taxing the ancillary sections. The new hospital was dedicated on September 21, 1956, with Col. Edgar L. Olson as Commander.

The USAF Hospital Wright-Patterson was redesignated as the USAF Medical Center Wright-Patterson effective July 1, 1969. It was also designated as the main Department of Defense medical institution within DOD Region 6, which encompasses a 10-state area with more than 450,000 eligible beneficiaries. As a result, it became a major referral and consultant center for the region. Locally, the Medical Center provides care for approximately 10,000 active-duty military personnel and their dependents, as well as approximately 43,000 retired military personnel from all U.S. services, and their dependents. Over 8,000 patients are hospitalized annually, and 400,000 outpatient visits are accommodated per year.

Besides its support of the base military population and its DOD Region 6 responsibilities, the Medical Center is the only Air Force center which offers hyperbaric compression therapy. Patients, both military and civilian, are referred to the center from the entire Midwest. Also unusual is the Occupational Medicine Service which provides medical support to the base civilian population of approximately 16,000. Support is also provided in aerospace medicine, dental care, environmental health, and veterinary service.

The Medical Center hosted a service-wide medical training exercise, entitled Medical Red Flag No. 6, May 19-26, 1982. This annual event is specifically designed to provide training in battlefield medicine for medical professionals. More than 600 physicians, dentists, veterinarians, physicians' assistants, and nurse practitioners from the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marines participated in the 1982 exercise. Classroom instruction was combined with training under simulated combat conditions. A complete air transportable hospital (ATH) was airlifted to WPAFB from the First Tactical Hospital at Langley AFB, Virginia, and provided training in a realistic environment. A UH-1 Huey helicopter used in air rescue missions was also on-site. Lt. Gen. Paul W. Myers, the Air Force Surgeon General and the originator of Medical Red Flag, participated in the exercise and commended this 6th annual event as being the best conducted so far.

The Medical Center uses in excess of 400,000 square feet of space to accommodate 356 beds and a 28-chair dental clinic, as well as outpatient, ancillary, and support facilities. The present facility has been recognized as being overcrowded, and additional mission requirements have forced the conversion of certain space to other than intended usage. To facilitate the use of space within the Medical Center, several departments and clinics have been relocated to other areas on base, far removed from the main complex, complicating the effective management of all Medical Center activities and inconveniencing patients.

The above deficiencies were originally identified in the early 1970s. In 1976, the Air Force started planning for a modernized and expanded physical plant to accommodate the increased workload and implementation of new residency programs. In 1981, the expansion and modernization of the USAF Medical Center was finally approved. On August 12, 1982, the contract for a \$115.3 million construction project was awarded to Blount Brothers Corporation of Montgomery, Alabama. Formal groundbreaking was held on September 14, 1982, with completion scheduled for October 1987. This project is designed to increase the size of the Medical Center from 297,000 square feet

to 657,000 square feet, making it the second largest in the Air Force Medical Service.

Major aspects of the hospital expansion include two additions for expanded outpatient facilities (bringing in functions from four outlying buildings), and construction of the largest and most comprehensive hyperbaric medicine chamber in the Air Force. Provision has also been made for additional ambulatory care services, specialized operating rooms, a dedicated ICU/CCU area, major dental services, professional training facilities including an auditorium, and a complete renovation of the interior of the existing structure to ensure compliance with appropriate building codes and accreditation standards.

Major Alfred G. Farmer, the first post surgeon, established Wilbur Wright Field's Medical Department with the aid of a lieutenant and three enlisted men in July 1917. A converted barracks served as their infirmary until the hospital, a temporary wooden structure, opened the next month. Within a year, the hospital expanded to 89 beds and a staff of 14 physicians and dentists, 11 commissioned nurses, and 63 enlisted men.

Shortly after the start of World War II, the installation opened its first permanent medical facility. The Patterson Field Post Hospital in Building 219 served military personnel from both Patterson and Wright fields. A staff of 15 doctors, six civilians, and 550 enlisted men supported the 50-bed hospital. Rapid wartime expansion soon overwhelmed the facility. By December 1942, a temporary cantonment-type hospital (Building 1113) opened in Wood City. It remained the main base hospital until 1956.

After the war, Building 219 converted to non-medical functions, including bachelor officers' quarters, Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) barracks, and offices for the Foreign Technology Division. The old hospital returned to medical use in 1977 when the medical center moved several clinics to the facility. It transformed into a pediatrics clinic in 1989. The World War II structure was also one of several buildings on base that employees claimed to be haunted.

In July 1944, health officials opened a station dispensary on Wright Field. Building 40 accommodated a host of medical services through the years, including a flight surgeon's clinic added in 1963. Occupational medicine became its main function. Building 40 remained in medical service until 2002, when a new Occupational Health Clinic, Building 675, opened in Area B.

The era of temporary hospitals ended in September 1956 with dedication of the 2750th U.S. Air Force Hospital, Building 830 in Area A. The \$5 million facility had a patient capacity of 348 beds. A dental clinic was added in 1969 and a new wing built in 1970 increased the hospital's capacity by 75 beds.

Until January 1, 1961, the base hospital was assigned to the 2750th Air Base Wing. On that date, it was reassigned to Headquarters Air Materiel Command (later AFLC). On July 1, 1969, the U.S. Air

Force Hospital Wright-Patterson became the U.S. Air Force Medical Center Wright-Patterson. In its new capacity, the hospital served as a major referral and consulting center for Department of Defense Health Service Region 5, a seven-state area containing more than 675,000 eligible beneficiaries. A \$123 million expansion completed in May 1989 established the Wright-Patterson Medical Center as the second largest hospital in the Air Force.

A major Air Force restructuring resulted in yet another redesignation for the facility in 1993. On July 1 of that year it became the Medical Center Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. The hospital also gained a new supporting unit, the 645th Medical Group, which was redesignated the 74th Medical Group the following year.

Besides supporting the base military population and Region 5, the medical center was one of at least two Air Force centers to offer hyperbaric medicine therapy. The medical center's residencies in obstetrics/gynecology, pediatrics, general surgery, emergency medicine, internal medicine, and psychiatry, which were fully integrated with Wright State University's School of Medicine, were unique within the Department of Defense. They allowed Air Force physician trainees and their civilian colleagues to share clinical experiences and faculties. Clinical rotations were shared using the medical center and several major teaching hospitals in Dayton and the surrounding area. Additionally, many of the medical center's clinical staff held appointments as faculty members at Wright State University as well as the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland, and actively shared teaching responsibilities with civilian clinical faculty members in the private health sector. The medical center and the Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) in Dayton also shared treatment capabilities that were highly specialized but in relatively low demand. For example, gynecological services were offered at Wright-Patterson, while patients at the base that needed inpatient psychiatric or sleep-disorder treatments were referred to the VAMC.

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The U.S. Air Force Medical Center Wright-Patterson supplied the largest contingent of base individuals deployed during the war. It sent 207 medical staff members to the Persian Gulf and the European theater of operations, and another 17 to support medical operations at four stateside bases. The medical center received 265 replacements, primarily reservists called to active duty, to continue delivering medical sendees at Wright-Patterson. The 111 Individual Ready Reservists (IRR) assigned to the Medical Center were part of the nation's first IRR mobilization since the

1961 Berlin Wall crisis (during which the United States and Soviet Union were on the brink of war over reunification of Germany and Soviet construction of the wall between the two halves of the city). The Air Force also selected the medical center as a primary, casualty-flow location. This required the center to activate its war plans and prepare an initial, casualty-flow triage site. Fortunately, the conflict produced few U.S. casualties. The Gulf War's first casualty, a soldier wounded on March 13 during a Scud missile attack on American barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, received care at the medical center. Finally, the center's blood-donor facility collected and processed more than 1,000 units of blood for the area of operations.

THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE (USAF) HOSPITAL, WRIGHT PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE (AFB), OH REDESIGNATION AS THE USAF MEDICAL CENTER, WRIGHT PATTERSON AFB, OH

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources