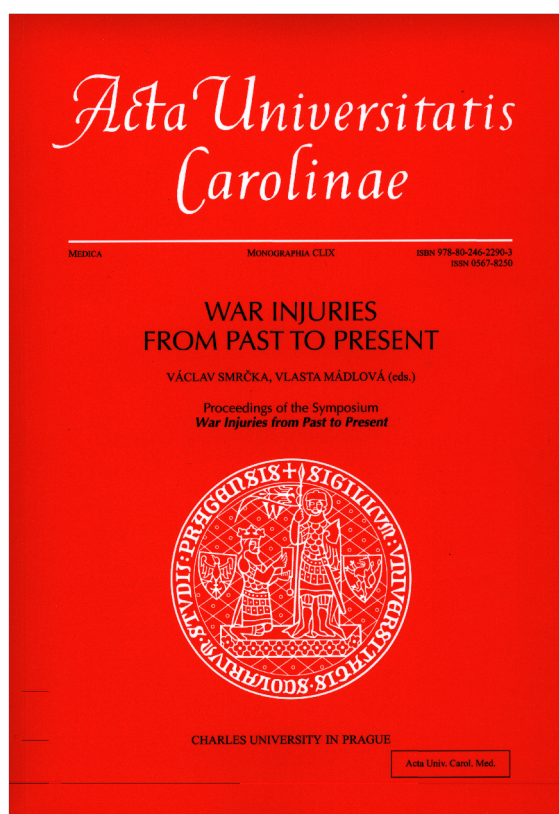


BOOK REVIEW

THE UNIQUE ANTHOLOGY OF WORKS ABOUT THE HISTORY OF WAR INJURIES

WAR INJURIES FROM PAST TO PRESENT. (EDS.) V. SMRČKA, V. MÁDLOVÁ, KAROLINUM PRESS, PRAGUE, 1ST EDITION, 2014, 178 PAGES, ISBN 978-80-246-2290-3.



The editors V. Smrčka and V. Mádlová prepared excellent proceedings of the Symposium “War injuries from past to present” held in Prague, on 5th March, 2011. It was published under the same title by the Karolinum Press (the publishing house of the Charles University, <http://cupress.cuni.cz>) in 2014.

All the 12 papers describe the history of war injuries from approx. 3 500 to 2 000 BC to the present. Earlier conflicts did not have the character of organized violence between states and were not a continuation of policy which is, as the Prussian war theorist Carl von Clausewitz puts it, a definition of war.

The history of war injuries is closely entwined with the development of weapons. During the Copper Age, the injuries were mainly gashes caused by stone or copper axes (as findings e.g. in the Hodonín area in our country attest). In the late Bronze Age, bronze spikes, later swords and daggers were used, so that some injuries were cuttings. However, the warriors not only attacked but protected themselves against the enemy as well. The first armors and helmets date from the Iron Age (750 BC to the beginning of our era).

The firearms causing direct and indirect injuries date to the era of Hussite wars. Gun injuries are distinctively different, as there often include infections and lacerations. To save life, the injured limb usually had to be amputated. War was gradually described as the epidemic of injuries (N. I. Pirogov).

The need of specialization in the treatment of war injuries led to the foundation of professional schools. E.g. in the 18th century, the so called Josephinum (1785 – 1874) was established in Vienna, and surgery was officially accepted as science and medical discipline. The importance and influence of this school where many Czech surgeons had worked, greatly affected the development of the war surgery in our countries. The development of weapons and weapon systems used during the war had its peak in the 20th century, when warfare agents causing burn injuries and intoxications were massively used for the first time, during the World War I. Nevertheless, half of the injuries were still caused by firearms and explosions.

The authors cite Prof. A. Jirásek who points out the difference between war- and peacetime injuries; they differ not only in the mechanism of their occurrence but also in the accompanying factors causing complications – e.g. stress, the lack of food, bad hygienic conditions and infections. He emphasizes the need to organize the first aid including the trans-

portation. Quick and right decisions of the surgeon are critical. Hand in hand with the increasing number of facial mutilating injuries the plastic surgery evolves and its share of the treatment of injured grows (Prof. F. Burian). In the last chapter, Assoc. Prof. L. Klein emphasizes the need to adhere to the internationally recognized procedures (ATLS, BATLS and CCCC) according to the experience with treatment of huge numbers of injured in both World Wars, the increasing share of high-energy injuries, and the development of contemporary science.

Separate papers are illustrated by drawings, photographs, tables and copious references to the scientific literature. The authors of the proceedings deserve to be thanked, as the anthology is appropriately composed, it brings many historically interesting and scarcely known facts and the summary of contemporary knowledge as well. Without any doubt, it is a suitable and absorbing complementary reading for all surgeons, especially for military surgeons and traumatologists.



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