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## EDITORIAL

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### THE URGENT NEED FOR A PHARMACEUTICAL CORPS IN THE U. S. ARMY.

**M**EMBERS of the American Pharmaceutical Association are, of course, aware that an effort is being made to convince the Government that a pharmaceutical corps should be provided for in the U. S. Army. Articles relating to this promotion are printed in the May issue, and in this number the subject is referred to in the report of the Philadelphia Branch A. Ph. A., and also under Editorial Notes, and a report of the Committee on National Defense of the American Pharmaceutical Association is made in the department of Societies and Colleges of this issue.

The Philadelphia Drug Exchange has sent an official communication to the War Department in which reasons are set forth, why a pharmaceutical corps should be provided for in the Army, and these are so well stated and defined that they will doubtless serve as a source of valuable information to our readers; they follow:

1. The present system of enlisting pharmacists in the Army, *not* as pharmacists, but as privates, is hopelessly antiquated. France, Germany, Japan and other foreign countries have a pharmaceutical corps in their armies in charge of a pharmaceutical expert.

2. The present system is unjust to pharmacy and pharmacists. Pharmacy is a profession and the pharmacist of to-day has had years of collegiate training and practical experience in scientific work. To enlist professional men as privates is not only unjust to the men, but is unjust to the Army, because it denies to the Army the possibilities of service which such men could render.

3. The present system is faulty. The status of pharmacists in the Army is very unsatisfactory. Officially, they are not pharmacists, but non-commissioned officers with responsible duties and no possibility of advancement in the Service as pharmacists. They can excel as privates and be promoted as privates, but they cannot excel as pharmacists and be promoted as pharmacists; and this injures the service.

4. The present service is detrimental to the efficiency of the Army itself, because it fails to recognize the importance of proper and sufficient pharmaceutical service and denies to the sick and wounded the best pharmaceutical service that the Nation can give.

5. The present system is unfair to the Medical Corps, because it denies that body the assistance and support that a properly trained pharmaceutical corps could give. The pharmaceutical

service could be made most valuable to the medical profession, not only in the hospitals, but also in the field.

Pharmacists have been trained, not only in the science and art of pharmacy, but also have had elementary instruction in some of the medical sciences, and with but little extra training could be made useful "medical assistants" in the field in the matter of surgical anesthesia, surgical dressing, etc., thus supplementing and helping the medical service.

We are informed by the Dean of a medical school in Philadelphia that 14,000 physicians will be required for an army of a million, that there are less than 7,000 physicians with ages of less than 31, and that, of these, probably one-half are physically unfit for service.

If this is correct, then only one-fourth of the necessary medical material is available. In view of such a possibility, it seems to us that pharmacists could be made, with extra training, most valuable "medical assistants" in the field, while in the hospitals they could be given charge of the medical supplies of the hospitals, and render pharmaceutical and chemical service in the compounding and dispensing of drugs and in the chemical and bacteriological examinations of excrements, foods, water, milk, etc.

It is becoming very evident that there will be difficulty in enlisting a sufficient number of medical men for the Medical Corps, and it is equally true that much of the work which is now performed by medical men could be done as well or perhaps better, on account of special training and education, by qualified pharmacists. This clearly indicates not only a way for making up the deficiency but also emphasizes one of the reasons assigned for a pharmaceutical corps. The enlarged army of 293,000 men will require 2,051 medical officers; a few weeks ago there were less than 600 enlisted. With a further increase, the relative number of medical officers must be maintained. So the point made is stressed that modern organization demands a delegation of some of the duties now assigned to the Medical Corps, to a pharmaceutical corps.

The *Journal of the American Medical Association*, under the caption of "The Medical Officers of the Army" explains the duties of the Medical Corps in service. We can not quote at length, but such statements occur as, "The camp infirmary is nothing but a small dispensary." "If the fighting has been severe and the casualties heavy, the sanitary personnel may be insufficient for this work, and in that case assistance is requested from the line, etc."

The quality of the food supply must be looked after, microscopical examinations must be made of secretions and excretions; water and other analyses are necessary for tracing the origin of infection, minor dressing, and many other essentials come to mind which the modern pharmacy school graduate is well qualified to perform. Specialization in army organization is quite as important as in other activities and an endeavor to circumvent the giving of professional recognition to pharmacists from prejudice or precedent does not tend toward best service or conservation of life.

Here is an opportunity for liberal coöperation on the part of the medical profession, by which they will not only render a service to those who offer themselves in the nation's cause, but to a profession that has worked with their own for centuries in a service for humanity.

The gunner seldom is given recognition for the part he plays in a battle, neither can the work of the pharmacist, however important, gain the plaudits given those who utilize his work or armamentarium, but he should receive encouragement.

The statement has been made that the pharmacist should not ask for rank, that service should be given through loyalty and patriotism. And still this is the appeal to medical men from an official source, "The life and professional work of the regular army medical officer has many attractions." "The position is one of honor, one that commands respect, and one that presents many opportunities for the ambitious." Should pharmacists not have a pride for their profession, in which such men as Scheele, Labarraque, Caventou, Pelletier, Davy, Rice, Procter, Maisch and others of equal distinction dared to labor in and for? Will we admit that the modern American pharmacist is neither competent nor deserving? The American manufacturers of biologics are all pharmacists; the same may be said of medicinal, chemical and pharmaceutical manufacturers. But this is simply an interpolation; better recognition of pharmacists is a selective proposition and will increase the number of those who will seek their field, and better pharmaceutical service will be helpful to medicine and of greater value to the public and to the Army.

The additional work or information that may be required of those who would be part of a pharmaceutical corps is certainly more readily and understandingly acquired by those who have had training and education than by those who have had neither.

The message is not only intended to stimulate a supreme effort for recognition, so that pharmacists will unite in pushing their claims, but also to urge a persuasion of those who may be able to assist in the culmination and encourage them also to coöperative action. Whatever is worth having is worth fighting for, and if gained after strenuous efforts will be correspondingly more appreciated. The contest is deserving of your effort; give to it your prompt, energetic and enthusiastic support.

If, as we are fully convinced, a pharmaceutical corps in the Army is in the interest of better service and conservation of the lives and well-being of our military forces, then surely, with this object paramount, the five hundred thousand engaged in pharmacy and the related industries, with investments that present a favorable comparison with other activities, a source of revenue for the Government, relatively exceeding that obtained from those shown greater favor, should be accorded due consideration, otherwise a good and sufficient reason for negation. But there must be determination, and the wisdom of the project must be shown.

E. G. E.

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