

The Royal Canadian Dental Corps in WORLD WAR II: 1939–1945

Canada's military dental services have looked after the oral health needs of Canada's troops in both World Wars, Korea, Afghanistan and many other peacemaking, peacekeeping, humanitarian and forensic operations. In the lead-up to the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Dental Corps (RCDC) in 2015, this article is the second in a series that will bring to light the history of the RCDC over the last century, celebrating the heritage, accomplishments and dedication of the dental services personnel of the Canadian Armed Forces.



CDAessentials is honoured to publish a regular series of articles, leading up to the celebration of RCDC's 100th anniversary.



Despite the significant contribution of the Canadian Army Dental Corps (CADC) during World War I, most of the CADC was disbanded when the war ended, leaving only a few dental officers thinly scattered throughout medical units. This arrangement came to an end in 1938 when CDA, at its annual meeting in Vancouver, adopted a report on military dentistry and forwarded it to the Minister of National Defence. In calling for an autonomous military unit, the report recommended that:

"...defence dental services should be directly under the Adjutant General's Department, not under the Director of Medical Services and that the Association, as representing Canadian Dentistry, be allowed to name the Director of Dental Services"

The Canadian government accepted these recommendations and subsequently disbanded the CADC, replacing it with the Canadian Dental Corps (CDC). Dr. Stephen

Moore, president of CDA at the time, was asked to bring forward the Association's choice for a director of the newly created CDC. That nominee was Dr. Frank M. Lott, who became the appointed Director of Dental Services for the Corps.

Furthermore, the word "Army" was removed from the name to recognize the role of the Dental Corps in supporting all three branches of the Canadian Forces: the Army, Air Force and Navy. The newly formed CDC immediately had to face the challenge of mobilizing for World War II. Eleven dental companies were formed throughout Canada, one per military district.

In October 1941, \$1750 was donated to purchase the first of 184 mobile dental



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clinics. Each clinic was mounted on a three-ton truck and equipped with a portable electric generator. With these mobile clinics and use of portable dental kits, dental treatment could be provided closer to the front lines.

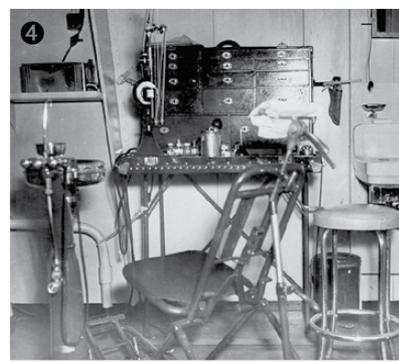
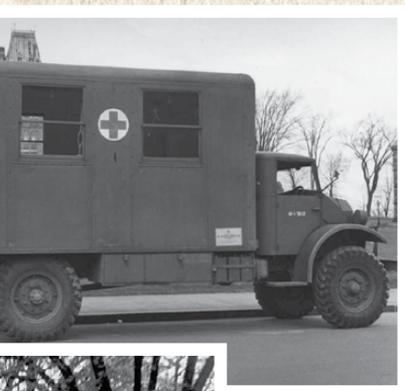
The CDC's past experience in the field was undeniable. However, the CDC now needed to serve all three branches of the Canadian Forces. The first dental detachment to serve at sea was established in 1943. The following summer, a dental team was posted to the Canadian hospital ship, SS Letitia, with the purpose of treating liberated prisoners of war in Manila. Eighteen dental companies served overseas, spread throughout Africa, England, Italy and other parts of Europe: 14 with the Army, 3 with the Air Force and 1 with the Navy. CDC personnel served in all theatres of war.

At the end of World War II, the CDC had over 5000 members, more than half of whom had deployed overseas. Fourteen dental officers and 19 dental

technicians gave their lives in active service during World War II.

The performance of the CDC during the war convinced the authorities to maintain its operations after demobilization. When the Canadian Army was reorganized in October 1946, the Dental Corps became a component of the Regular Force for the first time, with an establishment of 88 dental officers, 5 non-dental officers and 147 other ranks. In January 1947, His Majesty King George VI granted the Royal Warrant to the CDC, marking the beginning of the Royal Canadian Dental Corps (RCDC). 

CDA is playing a central role in commemorating the 100th anniversary of the RCDC in May 2015, reflecting CDA's role in establishing a military dental service in Canada and the close partnership between CDA and RCDC since that time.



World War II: The CDC in action

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