



Orthopedic ward, Leghorn 1945



ON THE WARDS

Nurses played an important role at the hospital, in both official and unofficial roles. Officially, they were responsible for the bulk of caregiving activities, including bathing patients, administering medication, changing dressings, taking vitals, and keeping notes on cases. Ambulatory patients and enlisted men assisted nurses with feeding their bedridden colleagues, turning them, making beds, cleaning the wards, and running errands. Nurses also juggled administrative demands: filling out reports, ensuring that patients had the right clothing upon discharge, and outfitting their wards with equipment.

Unofficially, nurses were expected to serve as moral support for the sick and injured. They would donate their own rations of cigarettes, candy, and gum to those recovering and frequently helped to procure partial pay for the invalids.



Nurses in central ward supply work room, Rome 1944

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Their response to the call of duty and magnificent performance is a testimonial to their patriotic zeal which was so highly praised and commended during the war.
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Lt. Col. Katherine E. Baltz



Above: General medicine ward, Ain-el-Turck 1943

Below: Courtyard of the Caserma Vittorio Emmanuele venereal center, Naples 1944

During World War II, there was a concerted effort to treat those with sexually-transmitted diseases in order to return men to the front lines. At Fort Benjamin Harrison, the 12th General Hospital cared for over 900 patients, many of whom suffered from gonorrhea. The Unit helped establish a tent facility in St. Barb, Algeria and managed the venereal disease center that was attached to the 180th Station Hospital in Naples. Later, the unit assisted in running a 2,400-cot clinic that housed and administered preliminary treatment to patients before they were sent to the 182nd Station Hospital to receive penicillin.

