



# The Canadian Forces Health Services (CFHS)

*“The Canadian military medical service has gained a worldwide reputation for its outstanding work and its professionalism”* **Medical Corps International Forum**

## Overview

### Introduction

The Canadian Forces Health Services face several transitional challenges in response to the cessation in 2011 of Canadian combat operations in southern Afghanistan, the initiation of a medical mentoring mission in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif, greater national focus on domestic defence and humanitarian operations, and the ongoing impact of the international financial downturn. Post-combat reconstitution in training and equipment is ongoing, as are further modularization and mobility enhancements to permit more rapid and scalable medical capabilities to support deployed conventional, humanitarian, and special operations. Although the positive impact of our mental health resiliency, suicide prevention, and stigma reduction efforts have been impressive, a significant burden of operationally-related mental health conditions is expected to persist and possibly increase for several years, necessitating an ongoing major focus on prevention and treatment.

Recruiting and retention of skilled health professionals is expected to become more challenging without the positive impact of Canadian ISAF operations and as a result of national demographic factors that increase civilian health care demands. National fiscal constraints necessitate our pursuit of greater allied interoperability and coordination, as well as a review of our organization and processes to further optimize efficiencies in an already-nimble health system. Further health system management efficiencies are expected as we expand the clinical support and analytical applications of the Canadian Forces Health Information System, which permits clinician access to electronic health records anywhere on land or at sea where Canadian Forces operate. The retention and expansion of our health research program will be critical to maintain leading-edge capabilities, to address evolving operational, occupational, and environmental health threats in expeditionary operations, to optimize our cold climate health service support as we further expand our military presence and sovereignty operations in our vast Arctic territories, to optimally target health resource allocations and program modifications, and to find better and less resource-intensive technological approaches to training. Medical simulation in particular is being studied closely to enhance operational clinical readiness while minimizing the need for expensive and logistically-complicated live tissue training, and maximum use of distance learning technologies is being aggressively pursued to mitigate some of the training challenges related to our physical dispersion across six domestic time zones. We will continue to inform allies and civilian health authorities of our clinical and operational lessons

learned through almost four years of leading the NATO Role 3 Multi-national Medical unit in Kandahar during combat operations, as done in the November 2011 Canadian Forces Operational Medicine Supplement to the Journal of Trauma.

We have the strong ongoing support of the Canadian government, the senior military leadership, the national civilian medical community, and the Canadian public. Our health professionals are well-trained, experienced, highly effective, disciplined, mission-focused, and incredibly dedicated. With such a foundation, there is no doubt that we will overcome our challenges and continue to maintain and enhance our clinical programs, capabilities, and operational readiness.

## **Main Features of the Canadian Forces Health Services Group**

### **Mission and Vision**

The mission of the Canadian Forces Health Services Group (CF H Svcs Gp) is to provide full spectrum, high quality health services to Canada's fighting forces wherever they serve. We are a professional military health service recognized for providing excellent care as an integral part of a world class fighting force. Our mandate is three-fold:

1. Deliver High Quality Health Care
2. Provide a Deployable Health Capability
3. Provide Health Services Advice

The CF H Svcs Gp is an independent Canadian health jurisdiction and system. This fully integrated team of military and civilian health professionals is a national leader in health services reform. The team supports the Canadian defence strategy by offering a patient-focused comprehensive spectrum of care in evidence-based health services.

The health needs of CF personnel are a top priority for the CF and the Government of Canada. The Surgeon General's obligation is to provide the advice and services necessary for CF personnel to maintain their health and mental well-being, to prevent disease, to diagnose and treat injury, illness, or disability, and to facilitate rapid return to operational fitness.

### **Organization / Command Structure**

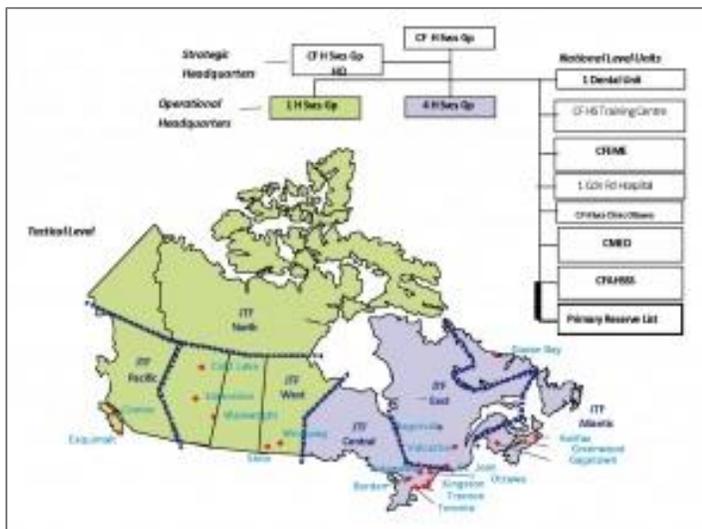
CF H Svcs Gp is a formation of the CF. It includes both the CF Medical and Dental Services. Organizationally, all health services resources for the Regular and Reserve Force are (with few exceptions) under the command of the Surgeon General. Two regional commands respond to domestic requirements: 1 Health Services Group (1 H Svcs Gp) for western Canada and 4 Health Services Group (4 H Svcs Gp) for eastern Canada. CF H Svcs Gp Headquarters is located in the National Capital Region. Dedicated health advisory and planning cells support the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army, the Royal Canadian Air Force, the CF operational commands, and the CF regional Joint Task Forces.

Currently, CF H Svcs Gp comprises 43 units and 82 detachments, including static clinics, field ambulances, a field hospital, two schools, one research establishment, a dental unit, one medical equipment depot, and other specialized elements.

## Training

CF H Svcs Gp personnel comprise over 40 health occupations. Most university-level professional clinical and scientific qualifications are obtained at civilian universities and clinical teaching facilities, while most military health training and education takes place at the CF H Svcs Training Centre (TC) located at Canadian Forces Base Borden, Ontario. The TC - provides training for the following personnel:

- Medical Technicians
- Dental Technicians
- Preventive Medicine Technicians
- Physician Assistants
- Nurses
- Dentists
- Physicians
- Healthcare administrators
- Health Services Operations Officers
- Biological Science Officers



Canadian Forces Health Services Centre (Ottawa)



Canadian Forces Health Services Training Centre

CF H Svcs Gp partners with civilian health facilities throughout Canada to provide clinical education for students studying to become physician assistants, and it also provides specialty courses in critical care, operating room procedures, and mental health services for nursing students. The TC collaborates with civilian colleges and institutions throughout Canada to provide occupational training for the following occupations:

- Medical technician

- Operating room technician
- Dental technician and hygienist
- Medical laboratory technologist
- Medical radiation technologist
- Biomedical technologist

Advanced education in aerospace medicine and hyperbaric diving medicine occurs at the School of Operational Medicine and the CF Environmental Medicine Establishment in Toronto and a submarine medicine course is conducted at CFB Halifax. In addition to many other post-graduate programs, full specialist residencies in occupational, preventive, aerospace, and hyperbaric medicine are completed at Canadian and American universities.

## Deployments

CF H Svcs Gp ensures that every CF member has access to essential health services outside of Canada. During large and established operations, CF H Svcs Gp provides on-site primary and emergency health services, including initial surgery and post-operative care, short-term surgical and medical in-patient care, as well as diagnostic imaging, dental, pharmacy, and laboratory services. Robust health protection capabilities are applied and deployed to identify and maximally mitigate health threats arising from operational, occupational, industrial, and environmental health hazards.

CF H Svcs Gp currently supports 15 international missions. CF health planners supporting the operational commands establish health services appropriate to diverse operational environments, such as the jungles of Central Africa, the deserts of the Middle East, and aboard ships off the Horn of Africa and in the Arabian and Caribbean Seas. For almost four years beginning in 2006, CF H Svcs Gp commanded and provided most of the staff for the NATO Role 3 Multi-national Medical Unit (R3MMU) in Kandahar. It provided tertiary care to coalition forces involved in combat operations in southern Afghanistan and was widely considered one of the best trauma hospitals in the world with a 97% casualty survival rate.



Role3MMU Operating Room Afghanistan



1 Canadian Field Hospital Haiti

In response to the catastrophic earthquake that struck Haiti on 12 January 2010, 1 Canadian Field Hospital rapidly deployed to Léogâne, Haiti and provided a Role 2 Enhanced medical-surgical facility to support the communities surrounding the city. Its services included laboratory, x-ray imaging, a pharmacy, dental services, 100 beds, two operating rooms, four intensive care units, and four resuscitation bays. Hospital personnel performed 199 surgeries and cared for many in-patients. It also provided surgeons to assist medical non-government organizations in the area.

Among other CF H Svcs Gp elements that provided medical support in other parts of the country, personnel of the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) provided in-patient care to wounded Haitians and medical outreach to remote areas. In combination, health personnel of 1 Canadian Field Hospital, the DART, Her Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) Athabaskan, and HMCS Halifax provided relief and treated approximately 22000 earthquake victims, in addition to delivering high-quality care to deployed CF personnel.

CF H Svcs Gp personnel currently mentor Afghan National Army health personnel at the Armed Forces Academy of Medical Sciences in Kabul and the regional military hospital in Mazar-e-Sharif.

### **Civilian-Military Co-operation**

To fulfill its mandate of providing comprehensive health services to CF personnel across Canada and abroad, CF H Svcs Gp is supported by a wide variety of Canadian civilian provincial and federal health agencies. Although its primary mandate is the care of CF members, CF H Svcs Gp is integrated within the mainstream of the national and provincial/territorial health systems through strategic alliances, memoranda of understanding, local arrangements, and a general spirit of cooperation and goodwill. CF H Svcs Gp also enjoys close relationships with allied military medical organizations in NATO and around the world. The complete CF health system has been accredited by Accreditation Canada, an independent healthcare quality authority that is internationally recognized for setting standards of excellence.

### **Research**

CF H Svcs Gp conducts significant basic and applied militarily-relevant health research through its Surgeon General Health Research Program and through collaborative projects with Defence Research and Development Canada, other partners within the Department of National Defence and other government departments, military health research organizations of the USA and of other allies, Canadian industry, and academia. The latter is coordinated through the Canadian Institute for Military and Veterans Health Research, a network of 22 Canadian universities. CF H Svcs Gp also leads many multi-national research efforts, for example chairing the Health, Medicine, and Protection area committee in NATO's Science and Technology Organization and several of its Research Task Groups. CF H Svcs Gp personnel publish many peer-reviewed articles and technical reports annually, and the November 2011 Canadian Forces Operational Medicine Supplement of The Journal of Trauma consists entirely of Canadian papers relevant to combat operations in southern Afghanistan.

# Leadership



**Commander Canadian Forces Health Services Group and  
Canadian Forces Surgeon General**

[Brigadier General J.J.R.S. Bernier, OMM, CD, QHP, BA, MD, MPH, DEH,  
FRCPC \(Hon\)](#)

**Deputy Commander Canadian Forces Health Services Group**

- [Colonel David Weger, CD](#)

**Deputy Surgeon General**

- [Colonel H.C. MacKay, CD, MD](#)

**Chief of Staff Canadian Forces Health Services Group**

- [Colonel J.P. Ruel, OMM, CD, BMASc](#)

**Canadian Forces Health Services Group Chief Warrant Officer**

- [Chief Warrant Officer Marchand, MMM, MSC, CD](#)

# **Awards**

## **Major-General Barr Award of Excellence**

The Major-General Barr Award of Excellence (referred to hereafter as 'The Award') is presented annually to recognize serving members of the CF H Svcs Gp and CFDS who, through their performance over an extended period of time, have demonstrated a high degree of excellence and professionalism and whose work has contributed to the betterment of the CF Health Services.

The Award consists of a trophy, a monetary award and a framed parchment scroll, signed by the Surgeon General, entitled "Major-General J.W.B. Barr Award of Excellence". The trophy, which is maintained on permanent display at CF H Svcs Gp HQ, is a shield bearing a series of plaques engraved with the names of each recipient.

The Award was instituted to honour the former Colonel Commandant of the Medical Branch and distinguished former member of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps and the CF H Svcs Gp.

## **Commander Canadian Forces Health Service Group Commendation**

The Commander Canadian Forces Health Service Group (Comd CF H Svcs Gp) Commendation is designed to officially recognize deserving military and civilian members of the Group, and those who support the Group. The Commendation may be awarded to:

- any member of the Group identified for exemplary service in the form of continuous, very high performance, or a single noteworthy accomplishment
- a person outside the Group for an achievement or for meritorious service that is of benefit to the CF H Svcs Gp; or
- a unit that has performed a deed or activity beyond the demands of normal duty.

The Commendation is a scroll, inscribed with the member's name and an appropriate citation, signed by the Commander CF H Svcs Gp.

## **Surgeon General's Clinical Coins**

*The Surgeon General's Clinical Coins are presented annually as a means of conveying appreciation and recognition to a worthy recipient who has through a conspicuous action directly impacted the delivery of high quality medical services thus bringing honour to the CF Health Services.*

*The Coin is made of bronze. Displayed on the front of the coin is the CF Medical Branch Crest with the coin's serial number engraved underneath. Bordering the crest is the inscription "Canadian Forces Surgeon General", two red maple leaves then, "Médecin-chef des Forces canadiennes". The reverse side of the coin displays a red maple leaf and cross in the centre, bordering with the title "Award for Excellence" over top and "Prix d 'Excellence" underneath.*

### **Commander's Coin**

The Commander's policy and intent is to present the Commander's Coin as a means of conveying appreciation and recognition to a worthy recipient who has rendered service to or in conjunction with the CF that exceeded the expectation of their employment or personal responsibilities.

The Coin is made of pewter. One side of the coin has the Medical and Dental crest with the medical and dental motto. Other side of the coin has the coin serial number and the CF crest with the inscription "Commander Canadian Forces Health Services Group" in French and in English.

### **W.R. Thompson Trophy**

The W.R. Thompson Trophy, named for by BGen (retired) W.R. Thompson a former Director General, Canadian Forces Dental Service (CFDS), is presented to a member or group to recognize the most significant contribution to the land, sea, or air operational role of the CFDS during the last calendar year, or over the past several years. The award may recognize training, operations, development of doctrine, or any other aspect of the CFDS operational role. Members being considered for meritorious conduct/activities during a specific deployment normally become eligible in the year of tour completion.