

Station Two Resource Packet: Duties

What Would You Do?

Directions: Read the following scenarios. Real life flight nurses likely faced challenges like these during World War II. Look at the options and pick the one that you think would be the correct answer or response in that particular situation.

1. You are stationed in the Pacific Theater as a flight nurse. You have been assigned to pick up injured patients from Guadalcanal. Upon landing, you talk to the flight surgeon in charge at the makeshift tent hospital. He has already decided which of his patients are ideal candidates for transport. As usual, you are traveling in a C-47. How many non-ambulatory soldiers can return with you today?

- A. 10
- B. 18
- C. 20
- D. 35

2. The soldiers have been loaded onto the C-47 and the plane has successfully taxied and taken off. The sights of Guadalcanal are quickly fading away. Now that you are airborne, who is in charge of the cargo area?

- A. Flight surgeon
- B. Surgery technician
- C. Bombardier
- D. Flight nurse



A C-47 air evacuation team from the 803rd Air Evacuation Transportation Squadron, Lieutenant Pauline Curry and Technical Sergeant Lewis Marker, check a patient on a flight over India. U.S. Air Force photograph, courtesy of the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force.

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3. The grisly reality of war sometimes took not only a physical toll on soldiers, but also a psychological one. What is the procedure for handling a potentially combative patient who might be suffering from neuropsychiatric trauma?

- A. Travel with an extra technician.
- B. Travel with fewer patients.
- C. Use sedatives to knock out the traumatized individual.
- D. Use a special compartmentalized C-47.

4. Midflight, you notice that one of your charges - a young Marine wounded by shrapnel - is turning pale. Concerned, you cross the cabin and take his wrist to get a pulse. His skin is cool to your touch, yet his pulse is rapid. What should you do?

- A. Monitor the Marine closely for the duration of the flight.
- B. Radio to the flight surgeon back at the hospital for his opinion.
- C. Administer a unit of plasma and oxygen - the Marine is going into shock.
- D. Immediately administer penicillin - the Marine's leg wounds appear to be infected.

5. Another patient on your flight has no obvious physical wounds, but exhibited a high fever at the field hospital. You notice he is now shaking uncontrollably and sweating profusely. You still have several hours to go before you will be near a hospital. What should you do?

- A. Administer quinine immediately; the patient has malaria.
- B. Administer penicillin immediately; the patient has typhoid fever.
- C. Administer an IV; the patient has dysentery.
- D. Administer fluids, as well as an IV and oxygen if needed. Monitor patient closely until landing.

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How Did You Do?

Directions: Score your responses using the key below. Give yourself one point for each correct response:

1. B - The C-47 could accommodate 18 litter (stretcher) patients. If patients were ambulatory (the “walking wounded”) up to 24 could be accommodated. The larger C-54 Skymaster was used to move injured service members great distances; its preferred load was 18 litter patients AND 24 ambulatory patients.
2. D - You! Typically physicians did not make the flight. As a second lieutenant, the flight nurse would outrank the male surgical technician and he would work under her authority.
3. A - When a potentially traumatized individual was amongst the patients, an extra male emergency technician would be sent along on the flight to help ensure the safety of all on board.
4. C - The cabin of the medical evacuation vehicles were not pressurized and thus often became very hot or cold. It was also common for patients to have adverse effects from the limited supply of oxygen at higher altitudes. The young Marine’s coloring, rapid heartbeat, and temperature indicate shock, possibly triggered by internal bleeding. You should administer oxygen and use the plane’s one bag of plasma to help stabilize the patient until you land.
5. D - The patient’s symptoms are common to several tropical diseases, including both malaria and typhoid fever. Unfortunately aboard the C-47, you lack the ability to properly assess the patient, and if he indeed appears to have malaria, you have no medication to administer. The best you can do at the moment is keep him hydrated and supply oxygen to help keep him stable until he can be transferred to a more sophisticated hospital for proper treatment.

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Scoring

0-1 = You need to hit the books! Check out your notes from Bowman Field again...your actions may have put the lives of soldiers in jeopardy.

2 = First flight? Learn from your mistakes and save lives!

3 = Not too shabby! Good work. You have room for improvement, but your performance has impressed your superiors.

4 = Nearly flawless!! You really know your stuff. A little more real-life experience and you will be a model nurse.

5 = Incredible performance!!! You are a credit to the nursing profession, keep saving lives. The Army Air Corps is lucky to have such a smart and confident nurse.