

22 July 1966

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF WILFORD HALL USAF HOSPITAL

Based on Information Available in the Historical Office, AMD

— September 1957

The first two wings of the modern U. S. Air Force Hospital, Lackland AFB, were opened as a unit of the Air Training Command. Replacing the makeshift Base Hospital, it was designed as the first large general hospital of the Air Force, offering facilities for treatment and training in all the major medical specialties, not only for the military community at Lackland but also for patients referred to it from operating Air Force organizations distributed around the world.

1 October 1959

The Hospital was combined with the School of Aviation Medicine at Brooks AFB and other units to form the USAF Aerospace Medical Center. Still under the Air Training Command, the Center became the first Air Force medical institution providing comprehensive facilities for clinical therapy, research, and teaching.

15 December 1960

The Teaching Wing of the Hospital was completed, consolidating all of its 1,000 beds in a modern structure for treatment of patients and for training of Air Force residents, interns, nurses, and medical technicians. A Hospital Auditorium was included in the new wing.

25 March 1961

Secretary of the Air Force Eugene M. Zuckert formally dedicated the Teaching Wing in a ceremony at which the Surgeon General of the Air Force and other dignitaries were present.

5 May 1961

By request of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, a medical team from the Hospital headed by the Commander, Brig. Gen. James W. Humphreys Jr., provided clinical support for the launching and recovery phases of the first suborbital space flight of Project Mercury by Astronaut Alan B. Shepard. Similar teams later were made available to NASA for the entire series of ballistic and orbital flights by Mercury astronauts. This effort led to the establishment by the Hospital of a Bioastronautics Operational Support Unit at Cape Kennedy Air Force Station, Florida.

1 August 1961

The first group of NASA astronauts arrived at the Hospital for their annual physical examinations, initiating a program under which the institution at Lackland was to serve as the medical examining and treatment center for astronauts assigned to the new Manned Spacecraft Center of NASA in Houston.

1 November 1961

With other units of the Aerospace Medical Center, the Hospital was absorbed into the new Aerospace Medical Division, Air Force Systems Command, created primarily to give medical support over the broad field of aerospace development and operations in the United States. Although its potentiality was greatly expanded, especially in research, current responsibilities of the Hospital were not immediately affected by the transfer to another major command.

— October 1962

The Clinical Research Laboratory of the Hospital was organized as a division of the new Department of Research and Education. Formerly the specialized Anesthesiology Research Laboratory in the Department of Surgery, it was enlarged and given responsibility for co-ordinating all of the Hospital's research, carried on in the past mainly as a by-product of patient care.

12 February 1963

Emphasizing its character as a general hospital serving the Air Force as a whole, the institution at Lackland was renamed the Wilford Hall U. S. Air Force Hospital, in honor of a distinguished flight surgeon and clinical specialist, the late Maj. Gen. Wilford F. Hall.

12 April 1963

An official research project to develop new and improved therapeutic procedures was assigned to the Hospital's Clinical Research Laboratory by the Aerospace Medical Division.

20 December 1963

Authority to establish the Aerospace Medical Laboratory (Clinical) as a separate function under the Hospital Commander was approved by the Air Force Systems Command. The effect was to make the Laboratory eligible for research and development projects of the Air Force in support of new flight systems and operations.

12 March 1964

Co-ordination of two research areas in support of the Manned Orbiting Laboratory program of the Air Force was assigned to specialists at Wilford

Hall Hospital. As MOL development progressed, the Hospital was given responsibility for more than a dozen other operational areas of crew health, clinical care, and fitness.

28 January 1965

The Aerospace Medical Laboratory (Clinical) concluded the first of a series of experiments to investigate the effects of inactivity on space crews during long flights. Two healthy subjects were confined in bed for 14 days, nearly motionless except that one was permitted a course of limited muscular exercise in the reclining position. The effort was to determine whether circulatory weakness formerly attributed to weightlessness might be comparable to the weakness resulting from patient bed rest, and could be overcome by special exercises.

— February 1965

The increasing need for medical support of troops and civilians in South Viet Nam brought a call to the Hospital from the Agency for International Development of the State Department to provide a seven-men surgical team of medical officers, nurses, and technicians for duty in Saigon. A team headed by the Chairman of the Department of Surgery, Col. Daniel C. Campbell Jr., was designated for this duty. They were among the first of a continuing withdrawal of specialists from the Hospital staff to care for the sick and wounded in Southeast Asia.

14 May 1965

Brig. Gen. James W. Humphreys Jr., Commander of the Hospital since September 1960 and a practising surgeon of distinction, relinquished his command to Brig. Gen. Thomas H. Crouch and departed for Saigon in response to another request from AID. He was appointed Director of the Health Division, U. S. Operating Mission in Viet Nam, in a temporary civilian capacity.

26 June 1965

The McKown Dental Clinic, latest unit in the growing Wilford Hall Hospital complex, was dedicated by the Assistant Surgeon General of the Air Force for Dental Services. Replacing six dental units formerly dispersed about the Base at Lackland, the modern clinic provided 52 treatment rooms, a library, lecture halls, laboratories, a conference room, and other facilities.