

ABSTRACT FOR SURGICAL CARE OF COMBAT TRAUMA IN THE NIGERIAN ARMED FORCES BY LT COL NS ONUCHUKWU

The decade-long Boko Haram Insurgency in the North Eastern flank of Nigeria has resulted to gross economic loss, infrastructural destruction and loss of lives. The war against this national security threat with attendant deployment of the Armed Forces has brought about near return of peace to the troubled region. However, with deployment and combat come injuries and deaths to Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen. The responsibility to prevent, treat and rehabilitate these wounded warriors lies with the Military Health System. The entire chain of survival system starting from point of injury to rehabilitation are in incremental fashion according to the echelon of the combat arm being supported. Despite the unconventional tactics and use of Improvised Explosive Devices by the insurgents, troops' survival from resultant horrific wound has remained impressive. Wound debridement and delayed primary closures of wounds were the commonest procedures in the field hospital in this conflict. Better survival is attributed to incremental improvement in the medical process, personnel and infrastructure over the years. Aeromedical evacuation and prompt surgical intervention has played a vital role in the highlighted improved survivability. 419 (98% of total) casualties were evacuated within the period of January 2017 and April 2018 by air component of OPERATION LAFIYA DOLE.

The concerted effort of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in winning the war and mission to boost the morale and care of the traumatized troops led to frequent very important personality visits to the wounded and enhanced rehabilitation. Rehabilitation is geared towards restoration of the wounded to the highest possible functional level, optimal reintegration and return to productive capacity. Visible in the counter-insurgency effort is also enhanced collaboration with allied Armed Forces and civilian health organizations. This mix is improving surgical care of combat trauma and enhancing training and research capacity of the surgical care givers.