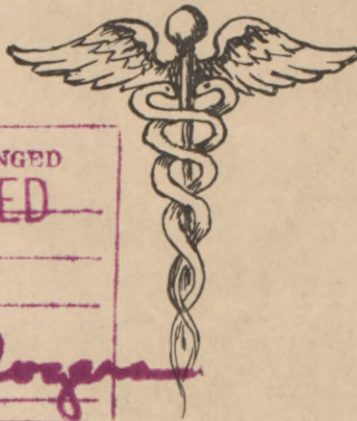


DISABILITY DISCHARGES
AMONG ENLISTED MEN

AUGUST 1941 THROUGH JULY 1943



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Frank B. Rogers

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WAR DEPARTMENT, OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL
MEDICAL STATISTICS DIVISION, STATISTICAL ANALYSIS BRANCH

U.S. Surgeon General's office. Medical statistics division.
Disability

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DISABILITY DISCHARGES

AMONG ENLISTED MEN

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SUMMARY

1. This report presents an analysis of the disability discharges granted to enlisted men under Section II, AR 615-360.
2. The rate of discharge for disability has increased steadily since March 1942. This increase does not necessarily reflect a larger proportion of inductees of poorer stock. It is more directly related to (a) changes in administrative procedures relative to discharges, (b) increased exposure of enlisted men to conditions leading to disabilities resulting in discharge, and (c) changes in the composition of the Army.
3. Neuropsychiatric causes accounted for nearly 45 percent of all the discharges for disability granted from May through July 1943.
4. The variations by Service Command (of induction or enlistment) in the causes of disability discharges do not appear to be significant.
5. Based upon rough estimates, enlisted men with less than 6 months service are subject to a rate of disability discharge three times that of men in service over 18 months.

NATURE AND EXTENT OF DATA

Enlisted men are discharged from the service because of physical or mental defects under one of three Sections of AR 615-360.

Section II discharges, commonly referred to as disability discharges, are granted to enlisted men upon order of a certificate of disability for discharge (WD, AGO Form 40), which certifies that the enlisted man has become unfit for military service because of physical disability. Under the provisions of WD Circular 161, 14 July 1943 and The Adjutant General's Office Memorandum No. W615-64-43, 26 August 1943, Section II discharges may also be granted to enlisted men initially classified as limited service who have acquired defects while in service or whose existing defects have been aggravated by military service if they do not meet current mental and physical induction standards and if their military duties are not considered sufficiently essential to warrant their retention in service.

Section VIII discharges are granted to enlisted men who, while mentally responsible for their actions, are inapt or inadaptible for

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military service, or have habits, traits of character, or physical defects caused by their own misconduct which render their retention in service undesirable.

Under the provisions of the WD Circular 395, 5 December 1942, Section X discharges may be granted to enlisted men initially classified as limited service, who can not meet certain minimum standards of performance and whose military duties are such as not to warrant their retention. WD Circular 161 and The Adjutant General's Office Memorandum W615-64-43 mentioned above provide for Section X discharges for limited service men who have not acquired new defects and whose existing defects have not been aggravated by military service if they do not meet current induction standards and if their military duties are not such as to warrant their retention in service.

This study does not pertain to discharges granted under the provisions of Section VIII or X but only to those discharges granted under Section II. The cause and frequency of discharges for disability granted under Section II are considered of particular interest since they indicate the extent to which men presumably fit at time of induction become physically or mentally unfit for service after having been subjected to training or combat duty, and because they may point to possible deficiencies in the medical procedures employed at induction examinations.

In order to develop these considerations, data were obtained from the following two sources:

a. Monthly* tabulations made by the Adjutant General's Office of the number of enlisted men discharged because of disability. This material covered a two year period from 1 August 1941 to 31 July 1943 and comprised 225,454 disability discharges.

b. Tabulations made by the Office of The Surgeon General of the number of enlisted men discharged because of disability during May, June, and July 1943. At the time these tabulations were made, this material comprised reports on 69,533 disability discharges; some additional reports on disability discharges granted during this three months period have since been received but are not included in this study.

During the two year period studied, three important changes were

* The number of disability discharges reported each month comprises the total number of reports processed during a definite period of time, comparable to but not identical with the calendar month for which the report is made. It is estimated that 95 percent of the total discharges reported for a calendar month were granted during that month, while the remaining 5 percent were discharges granted in previous months, concerning which information had been received too late to be processed with the previous months' reports. The total discharges reported for June 1942 and June 1943 include somewhat larger numbers of discharges granted in previous months than are included in other months because of the efforts made to close out the number of discharges for each fiscal year.

made in administrative procedures relative to disability discharges. W.D. Circular 270, 27 December 1941 announced the principle that during the emergency manpower was to be conserved, and, as a corollary of this principle, disability discharges were to be restricted to those men who could not perform any useful services. Office of The Surgeon General Circular Letter No. 99, 4 September 1942, directed Army hospitals to expedite the discharge of neuropsychiatric cases which had accumulated in these hospitals. The Adjutant General's Office Memorandum W 600-39-43, 26 April 1943, directed medical officers of all units to increase their efforts to discover neuropsychiatric cases under their command and to discharge those who could not be expected to render full military duty.*

This report considers the data in respect to:

- a. Trend of disability discharges.
- b. Causes of disability discharges.
- c. Causes of disability discharges by Service Command of enlistment or induction.
- d. Disability discharges by length of service.

TREND OF DISABILITY DISCHARGES

The number of enlisted men discharged and the number of discharges per 1000 enlisted strength per month are shown in Table 1 and Figure 1 by months, during the two year period from 1 August 1941 to 31 July 1943.

Between August and December 1941 the number of enlisted men discharged for disability per 1000 strength showed only slight variations from an average of about 3 per month. The number of enlisted men discharged in January 1942 decreased sharply to 1.7 per 1000 strength and further decreases occurred in February (1.5 per 1000 strength) and March (1.3 per 1000 strength). These decreases probably reflect the administrative restrictions imposed on the granting of disability discharges as directed in WD Circular 270 referred to above.

Commencing in April 1942, the disability discharge rate increased steadily. The rate of discharge for disability in July 1943 was 2½ times that prevailing during the first quarter of 1942. A number of factors contributed toward this increase. No data are available to measure accurately the relative importance of these contributing factors. It is believed that there has been no significant change in the general quality of the men being inducted.

* This memorandum also directed medical officers at induction stations to use all possible means to discover neuropsychiatric cases and prevent their induction.

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TREND OF DISABILITY DISCHARGES AMONG ENLISTED MEN

AUGUST 1941 — JULY 1943



FIGURE 1

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During the early months of 1942 men were being inducted in numbers which were relatively large in proportion to the size of the Army. Because the discharge rate among newly inducted men is considerably higher than among men with longer service the increasing proportion of new inductees in the Army was for a time a factor tending to produce a higher rate of disability discharge. When with the growth of the Army the new inductees began to constitute a decreasing proportion of the total enlisted strength this tended to produce a lower rate of discharge for disability.

However in the later part of 1942 the rate of discharge for disability began to show an upward trend. Such factors as the initiation of more rigorous training programs to prepare men for actual combat duty and the marked increase in the proportion of men discharged for neuropsychiatric causes which was given impetus by the directives announced in Office of The Surgeon General Circular Letter No. 99 and by The Adjutant General's Office Memorandum W 600-39-43 mentioned above, were among the influences responsible for this trend.

The upward trend became more pronounced in 1943. An additional factor, albeit a relatively unimportant one, which came into play was the discharge of battle casualties evacuated to the zone of the interior.

CAUSES OF DISABILITY DISCHARGES

Table 2 shows the percentage distribution of the disability discharges granted during May, June, and July 1943 according to cause of disability. Neuropsychiatric causes were responsible for nearly half (44.6%) of all discharges for disability granted during this period. Psychoneurosis was the principal mental disorder reported among the neuropsychiatric causes for discharge and it accounted for 32.0 percent of all discharges. Schizophrenia (4.1%) and epilepsy (2.2%) were next in importance among the neuropsychiatric discharges.

Musculo-skeletal defects accounted for 11.1 percent of all discharges. This class includes disorders of the feet, congenital abnormalities and malformations, and diseases of the musculo-skeletal system. Respiratory conditions (excluding tuberculosis) accounted for 6.0 percent of all disability discharges. Gastric and duodenal ulcers (5.7%), arthritis (5.0%), organic heart disease (4.3%), and disorders of the ears (4.0%) were prominent among the other causes of discharge.

The percentage distribution of discharges by cause of disability is shown separately for May, June, and July 1943 in Table 2. No marked variations among the principal causes of discharge are observed during this three month period.

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CAUSES OF DISCHARGE BY SERVICE COMMAND OF ENLISTMENT OR INDUCTION

Table 3 shows the percentage distribution of discharges granted during May 1943 by cause of disability and Service Command of enlistment or induction. The variations observed between Service Commands are generally not significant. An exception was noted in the case of discharges due to venereal diseases. This group of diseases accounted for 4.5 percent of all disability discharges in the First Service Command as compared with an average of 1.8 percent for the entire United States. Further study of the 54 discharges due to venereal diseases among men from the First Service Command disclosed that all were cases of syphilis and that 50 of the 54 men discharged had been in the Army less than three months. It appears highly probable that all of these 50 syphilis cases had been contracted prior to induction and had not responded to therapy in the Army.

DISABILITY DISCHARGES BY LENGTH OF SERVICE

The disability discharges granted during May 1943 are shown in Table 4, classified by cause of discharge and by length of service. The high proportion of discharges accounted for by men with short periods of service reflects, in large part, the substantial proportion of newly inducted men in the Army. The figures shown in Table 4 do not, therefore, constitute a proper basis by which to measure differences in the rate of discharge by length of service. However, the differences in distribution between the various causes of discharge may be of some interest as showing those causes which tended to develop sooner or later than the average.

While about 40 percent of the men discharged for all causes were in the service less than 6 months, the corresponding proportion of men discharged on account of venereal diseases was 82 percent; for gastro-intestinal diseases, the proportion was 30 percent; for tuberculosis 21 percent; and for traumatism only 8 percent.

In order to obtain some idea as to the variations in the rate of discharge according to length of service, the distribution of the disability discharges in May 1943 by length of service was related to an estimated distribution of the enlisted strength of the Army for comparable periods of service. In so far as such estimated figures go, they indicate that the rate of discharge for disability is relatively low among enlisted men with less than two months of service, reaches a peak among men with about three months of service, and declines rapidly among those in the Army longer than six months. On the basis of these estimates, enlisted men with less than six months of service appear to be subject to a rate of disability discharge more than three times as high as that of men in the service over 18 months.

TABLE I

DISABILITY DISCHARGES BY MONTH; AUGUST 1941 - JULY 1943
ENLISTED MEN

M O N T H	A U S ENLISTED STRENGTH (000 OMITTED) ✓ ¹	NUMBER OF DISABILITY DISCHARGES	NUMBER DISCHARGED PER 1000 STRENGTH PER MONTH ✓ ²
1941			
August	1,452	4,919	3.3
September	1,483	4,681	3.2
October	1,503	5,108	3.3
November	1,509	4,319	2.9
December	1,514	4,483	2.9
1942			
January	1,632	2,940	1.7
February	1,853	2,640	1.5
March	2,092	2,877	1.3
April	2,339	3,344	1.4
May	2,562	4,040	1.5
June	2,761	4,274	1.5
July	2,954	5,005	1.6
August	3,180	4,695	1.4
September	3,496	5,450	1.6
October	3,875	6,949	1.7
November	4,323	8,114	1.9
December	4,778	10,261	2.1
1943			
January	5,180	13,498	2.5
February	5,507	15,482	3.0
March	5,806	18,208	3.0
April	6,058	19,766	3.3
May	6,203	20,521	3.2
June	6,308	26,732	4.2
July	6,422	27,148	4.1

✓¹ Estimated as of the 15th of each month.

✓² Adjusted to a 30 day month.

Source: Based upon data furnished by AGO Machine Records Branch.

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TABLE 2
DISABILITY DISCHARGES BY CAUSE
ENLISTED MEN
May - July 1943

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CAUSE OF DISABILITY DISCHARGE	MAY	JUNE	JULY	MAY - JULY
	PERCENT DISTRIBUTION			
NEUROPSYCHIATRIC	42.8	45.8	44.8	44.6
Psychoneurosis	29.5	33.0	32.8	32.0
Schizophrenia	4.6	4.2	3.5	4.1
Epilepsy	2.6	2.2	1.9	2.2
Neurological	2.4	2.0	2.2	2.2
Mental deficiency	1.3	1.4	1.2	1.3
Neurocirculatory asthenia	0.1	0.7	1.0	0.6
Constitutional psychopathic state	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.2
Alcoholism	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Other psychoses	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2
Other	1.9	1.8	1.5	1.7
MUSCULO - SKELETAL	11.1	10.5	11.8	11.1
Musculo-skeletal	7.5	7.3	7.6	7.4
Feet	3.1	2.8	3.7	3.2
Congenital abnormalities and malformations	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.5
INFECTIOUS AND GENERAL DISEASES	9.2	8.4	9.1	8.9
Arthritis	5.1	4.8	5.2	5.0
Diseases of the endocrine system	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.8
Cancer and other malignant tumors	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Diseases of the blood and blood forming organs	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Diseases not elsewhere classified	2.8	2.4	2.8	2.7
CARDIOVASCULAR	8.5	7.4	6.5	7.4
Organic heart disease	4.9	4.2	3.8	4.3
Hypertensive diseases	1.6	1.4	1.2	1.4
Varicose veins	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.7
Hemorrhoids	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Coronary thrombosis, coronary embolism and coronary sclerosis	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Other	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.8
GASTRO - INTESTINAL	8.2	7.7	6.7	7.5
Gastric and duodenal ulcers	6.2	6.0	5.0	5.7
Hernia	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.7
Other	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.1
EYES, EARS, NOSE AND THROAT	8.1	7.6	8.5	8.1
Ears	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.0
Eyes and annexa	3.1	2.9	3.7	3.3
Nose and Throat	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.8
RESPIRATORY (EXCLUDING T. B.)	5.9	6.0	6.0	6.0
GENITO - URINARY (EXCLUDING VENEREAL)	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.0
VENEREAL DISEASES	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.7
Syphilis	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.6
Gonorrhoea	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TUBERCULOSIS	1.6	2.2	2.1	2.0
TRAUMATISM	0.7	0.6	0.9	0.7
Amputation of limb	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2
Fracture of bone	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.1
Other	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
ALL CAUSES	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
NUMBER ENLISTED MEN DISCHARGED	20,459*	23,958*	25,116*	69,533*

* Preliminary

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TABLE 3
DISABILITY DISCHARGES BY CAUSE AND SERVICE COMMAND
ENLISTED MEN
MAY 1943

CAUSE OF DISABILITY DISCHARGE	TOTAL UNITED STATES	SERVICE COMMAND OF INDUCTION OR ENLISTMENT								
		I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
		PERCENT DISTRIBUTION								
Neuropsychiatric	42.8	42.6	42.9	45.1	43.1	45.3	43.2	40.8	43.2	38.2
Musculo-skeletal	11.1	9.5	10.7	10.3	12.3	10.2	11.9	11.8	10.8	11.0
Infectious and General Diseases	9.2	7.8	8.7	9.6	7.9	8.6	9.1	11.8	9.2	11.8
Cardiovascular	8.5	8.0	10.8	8.1	7.5	7.9	8.8	8.1	7.4	9.1
Gastro-intestinal	8.2	7.6	7.9	8.2	9.1	7.6	7.4	9.3	8.2	8.2
Eyes, Ears, Nose, and Throat	8.1	10.8	9.5	9.5	8.0	7.1	7.4	6.9	6.8	7.8
Respiratory (excl. T.B.)	5.9	5.1	5.1	4.8	6.1	6.6	5.6	5.9	6.6	6.9
Genito-urinary (excl. Venereal)	2.1	2.3	1.7	1.7	2.5	1.8	2.4	1.7	2.3	2.0
Venereal Diseases	1.8	4.5	1.3	0.5	0.9	2.8	2.1	1.0	2.7	1.9
Tuberculosis	1.6	1.5	1.0	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.3	1.7	2.1	2.2
Traumatism	0.7	0.3	0.4	0.7	1.1	0.5	0.8	1.0	0.7	0.9
All Causes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number Enlisted Men Discharged	20,459*	1,200*	3,273*	2,135*	3,220*	2,308*	2,255*	1,678*	2,544*	1,846*

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TABLE 4
DISABILITY DISCHARGES BY CAUSE AND LENGTH OF SERVICE
ENLISTED MEN
MAY 1943

LENGTH OF SERVICE (in months)	CAUSE OF DISABILITY DISCHARGE										PERCENT DISTRIBUTION					
	ALL CAUSES	NEURO-PSYCHIATRIC	MUSCULO-SKELETAL	INFECTIOUS AND GENERAL DISEASES	CARDIO-VASCULAR	GASTRO-INTESTINAL	EYES, EARS, NOSE AND THROAT	RESPIRATORY (EXCL. T.B.)	GENITO-URINARY (EXCL. VENEREAL)	VENEREAL DISEASES	TUBERCULOSIS	TRAUMATISM				
Less than 2	4.5	3.1	3.8	2.2	5.9	3.2	5.5	4.2	5.8	53.5	3.1	--				
2	9.7	10.2	9.0	6.1	12.0	8.5	10.3	11.2	10.0	15.5	3.7	1.4				
3	8.6	9.0	10.1	7.9	9.6	6.6	8.5	9.3	8.6	6.3	2.8	--				
4	7.1	7.5	8.5	7.0	7.4	4.7	6.9	7.5	7.0	3.0	3.4	0.7				
5	9.8	10.2	11.6	10.7	8.3	6.7	10.9	9.5	9.4	3.9	7.5	6.2				
Under 6	39.7	40.1	43.0	33.9	43.2	29.7	42.1	41.7	40.8	82.2	20.5	8.3				
6-11	38.4	36.8	41.6	45.6	39.6	35.5	43.5	35.3	41.4	10.7	39.7	23.6				
12-17	12.5	13.0	10.1	12.6	10.5	19.5	8.4	14.2	8.9	3.0	17.4	28.5				
18 and over	9.4	10.1	5.3	7.9	6.7	15.3	6.0	8.8	8.9	4.1	22.4	39.6				
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0				
Number Enlisted Men Discharged	20,459 *	8,770 *	2,264 *	1,894 *	1,736 *	1,677 *	1,661 *	1,202 *	420 *	366 *	324 *	145 *				

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