

IAF HUMAN SPACEFLIGHT SYMPOSIUM (B3)
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MILITARY MEDICAL SUPPORT TO THE SPACE DOMAIN. ANY NEWS?

Abstract

With the London declaration in 2019, space has become an official Domain of operations in NATO, enabling the provision of defense and security activities for the continuation of critical satellite-based services daily used by our societies. Simultaneously, Space Agencies are moving their focus deeper into the Solar System, leaving opportunities behind for private undertakings in Low Earth Orbit (commercial/industrial/scientific...). As humans become more and more involved in space activities, medicine will inevitably get an increasing role in sustaining safety, health, and performance in space. The standards of care for such a new diverse population will probably be different from those designed for the few highly selected frontline astronauts onboard exploration missions. The Allied medical support principles applied in military operations may prove useful in shaping a healthcare system for an evolving space community in such a harsh environment. The military experience of trauma systems proved that any clinical solution requires an effective organization to accomplish quality of care and best patient outcomes. The continuum of care cannot be separated by a continuum of management of the medical resources, particularly since multinational endeavours for space colonization are performed in challenging conditions at the leading edge of technological innovation. This communication wants to highlight the critical role that military medical capabilities could play in creating a safe and secure space environment (search-and-rescue operations, expeditionary assets, regulatory activities, organizational strategies, scientific accomplishments). An Allied perspective on advancing interoperable military medical solutions as part of a peaceful effort to sustain a collective support infrastructure is also presented.