

## BOOK REVIEW

### **The Fevered Fight: Medical History of the American Revolution** *by Martin R. Howard*

Hardback, 276 pages  
Pen & Sword Books  
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The “shot heard round the world” was fired on 19 April 1775. No one knows who fired it, British soldier or colonial militia man, but it marked the start of the Battles of Lexington and Concord, and thus, the American War of Independence.

In this book Martin Howard, a retired consultant and visiting professor at the University of York, has written a detailed account of the role that health care and medicine played in that revolution. He starts with a general discussion of civilian and military medicine of the period. He then describes the state of civilian and military medical services in Britain and its allies, and separately those of colonial America and France, its ally, on the eve of the war.

Howard goes on to focus on 10 specific military campaigns of the war, starting with Lexington and Concord and finishing with Yorktown in 1781 and its aftermath. Yorktown, where the British surrendered, was the last major land battle of the war. He describes the medical services, frequently improvised or chaotic, the application or otherwise of public health measures in the military of both sides, the management of injured soldiers and the treatment of illness.

The final chapters consider the effect of disease, especially smallpox, on the American Revolution and the early development of American medicine away from old-world dominance. An interesting point that emerges is the importance that the American commander George Washington placed on health and medicine. He had been a victim of smallpox himself and strongly supported inoculation for the troops.

The text is densely factual, and there are 58 pages of notes and bibliography. In the circumstances, having just six pages for the index seems short. Simple maps of four theatres of conflict and a chronology of the major events of the revolutionary war help the reader.

This book will be interesting for readers who want to learn more about the military medical landscape of the day and the medical aspects of the battles. It would be rewarding to read it in tandem with another book that put the campaigns in the context of this revolution as a whole.

**Lee Coppack**  
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