

## E5 ORAL PRESENTATION – ABSTRACT

# The Admission of Surgeons in the Line Regiments of the Portuguese Army: From 1763 to 1816

Rui Pires de Carvalho <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> MD, PhD. Retired Lieutenant Colonel (Army Medical Corps); Visiting Professor - Faculdade de Letras - University of Lisbon; President of the History of Medicine Section of the Geographical Society of Lisbon; Cuf Hospitals of Descobertas and Torres Vedras

✉ [rui.carvalho.shm.sgl@sap.pt](mailto:rui.carvalho.shm.sgl@sap.pt)



This work is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>

**ABSTRACT:** The Author reviews the admission procedures for Surgeons-Majors (Cirurgiões Mores) and Assistant-Surgeons (Cirurgiões Ajudantes) of the Line Regiments, regarding credentials evaluation and assessment exams, types of contracts, as well as the evolution of their training, careers and status in the 53 years in question, using various documentation from the Military Historical Archive (in particular the Record Books of the Military Hospitals Department and Regiments) and Agendas and Almanacs from the Army Library, among other sources.

Of different origins, in the middle of the eighteenth century his training was, in most of the surgeons of the Line Regiments, insufficient, to the point that the Count of Lippe assumed: “*Os capitães devem contentar-se do Cirurgião, que segue a sua Companhia, se fizer a barba aos Soldados todas as vezes, que for preciso; se tomar grande cuidado dos feridos, e enfermos; se conservar na subordinação que deve; e encher com exatidão as obrigações do seu lugar*”<sup>1</sup>. During this period, the surgeon’s assistants were «*fatura*» of the surgeon-major<sup>2</sup>, that is, he was the one who hired them and paid them for a certain period of years, and it was also he who fired them for incompetence or other justified reason. Consulting the Master Books of the Regiments we find, at the end of the eighteenth century, several assistants hired for periods of 3, 4 or 6 years, as well as some dismissed by the surgeon-major for being unskilled, “*ignorantes na arte da cirurgia e sangria*”<sup>3</sup> or “*mal aplicados e mal conduzidos*”<sup>4</sup>. The surgeon-major of a Regiment, at the time of the Count of Lippe, earned the salary of lieutenant, being graduated to lieutenant in 1805. In that year, it is presumed that the surgeon’s assistant was equivalent to 1st sergeant.

The episode in national history that stands out in this period is known as the “French Invasions”, and the author demonstrates their importance in the progressive technical requirements in the incorporation of these facultatives, with the creation of the Board Examination of Military Surgeons, thereby increasing the prestige of the class (starting with the proposal of graduation of the surgeon-major to captain and the assistants to lieutenant, in 1810). The



author reproduced on slides, from the “*Relação dos cirurgiões aprovados e reprovados 1810-1813*”<sup>5</sup>, several records of examinees – some approved, others failed (of which several came to be reexamined and approved with distinct careers), others who dropped out – from different origins: from the army and the navy, including sergeants and enlisted men, or civilians.

Later on, from 1816, by British influence (Beresford), army surgeons had increasing institutional preponderance over the physicians since Regimental Hospitals began to be implemented.

In this context, it is not insignificant to note their expressive representation among the founders of the Society of Medical Sciences of Lisbon, in 1822, and of the Royal Schools of Surgery of Lisbon and Porto, in 1825.

**KEYWORDS:** Surgeons-Majors, Assistant-Surgeons, Admission and Careers, Line Regiments, Portuguese Army

- 1 “The captains must be content with the Surgeon, who follows his Company, if he shaves the Soldiers as often as necessary; if he takes great care of the wounded and the sick; to keep it in the over-ordination it should; and to fill with exactness the obligations of his place”.
- 2 “«bill»” of the surgeon-major.
- 3 “ignorant in the art of surgery and bloodletting”.
- 4 “Poorly applied and poorly conducted”.
- 5 “List of approved and disapproved surgeons 1810-1813”. AHM, PT/AHM/DIV/1/14/008/08