



The Secrets of the Anzacs: The Untold Story of Venereal Disease in the Australian Army, 1914–1919

Raden Dunbar

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During World War I, nearly 60,000 soldiers in the Australian army were treated by army doctors in Egypt, Europe, and Australia for venereal diseases. *The Secrets of the Anzacs* reveals how this silent, secret scourge took hold in Cairo in 1914, and continued until 1919 when survivors of the war waited in Europe to be repatriated. Moralistic commanders in Egypt ordered strict punishments for men with VD, and the young victims were sent back to Australia in disgrace, most of them inventing amazing excuses for their inexplicable return. Medical officers couldn't afford to be puritanical, though. They tried to prevent the diseases, as well to cure them with toxic drugs in army VD hospitals in Cairo, in England, and at Langwarrin, near Melbourne. Eventually, even the army had to face facts, and, after the AIF arrived in Europe in 1916, commanders ordered that huge quantities of prophylactics be distributed, and that safe-sex education be given as well.

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