Walter Reed Encyclopedia Article

Walter Reed

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Walter Reed

1851-1902

Medical officer in the United States Army who helped demonstrate how to control yellow and typhoid fevers. Between 1898 and 1901 Reed led two commissions to study the origin and spread of infectious epidemics in army camps. His experiments proved that flies were the predominant carriers of typhoid fever and that unsanitary conditions helped spread it. Reed's experiments focusing on yellow fever established that the bite of certain mosquitoes transmitted the disease. His team conducted a series of daring experiments in which physicians and soldiers volunteered to be infected by yellow fever germs, so that they could determine the course of the disease and how it might be controlled.