

XVI ABRILS DE L'HOSPITAL

Hospitals and War

From the Middle Ages to the 19th Century

Berlin, 31 March-3 April 2027

War has profoundly shaped the history of healthcare, whilst hospitals have played a crucial role in managing the course and consequences of warfare. Armed conflicts repeatedly put existing systems of medical and charitable care to the test, leading to transformations in the organisation, architecture and administration of hospitals, as well as in their relations with military and political authorities. The study of hospitals in times of war therefore offers a valuable perspective on the history of medicine, architecture, institutions and society.

The Middle Ages provide particularly significant examples. Hospitals founded or run by military orders, such as the Templars, the Hospitallers, the Teutonic knights, combined charitable and military functions and developed extensive care networks. Other, less well-known military uses of hospital institutions included the transformation of hospitals in mountainous and rural areas into fortresses by civic authorities, in order to control the territory against enemy attacks, as well as the establishment of hospitals within city walls by urban paramilitary associations, which served a role in conflicts between rival factions. During sieges and military campaigns, hospitals had to meet the needs of wounded and sick soldiers, whilst their location, organisation and architecture increasingly reflected the demands of warfare.

From the early modern period onwards the growing involvement of states, the professionalisation of armies and the increased scale of military operations fostered the development of military hospitals, field hospitals and military lazarettos.

Existing religious and charitable institutions were sometimes incorporated into military systems, whilst new architectural and organisational solutions responded to changing approaches to hygiene, contagion, treatment and the care of soldiers. The founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1863 marked a fundamental turning point in international assistance to the wounded in times of war.



The **XVI ABRILS DE L'HOSPITAL** conference to be held in Berlin (Freie Universität) from 31 March to 3 April 2027, aims to explore these transformations across Europe, from the medieval hospital to the emergence of modern humanitarian medicine, examining how war has transformed hospitals and how hospitals, in turn, have shaped the experience, funding and organisation of war.

The sessions will focus on four main research themes:

1. Hospitals run by military orders
2. The transformation and adaptation of hospital organisation and architecture because of armed conflicts
3. Lazarettos and military hospitals
4. Military hospitals and territory
5. Care for soldiers and civilians

The call for papers is open until **15 October 2026**. Proposals must be sent to the conference organisers at abrils.hospital@ub.edu and must contain, in a unique file, the following information: name and surname, academic affiliation, title of the proposal, an abstract of **150-200 words** and a short curriculum vitae of no more than **200 words**.

Accepted proposals will be divided, at the discretion of the organising committee, into lectures and poster presentations.

Papers may be submitted in **English** and, in exceptional cases, in Catalan or Spanish.

The organisers will attempt to secure a financial contribution towards travel and accommodation costs from an external funding body. If this is successful, the accepted participants will be informed as soon as possible.

Successful proposals will be announced by **20 December 2026**.

Registration for the conference will be free of charge.

Organizer Committee: Thomas Ertl (Freie Universität Berlin), with Pol Bridgewater and Antoni Conejo (IRCVN-Universitat de Barcelona), Thomas Frank (Università di Pavia), Marina Gazzini (Università di Milano)

Scientific Committee: Antoni Conejo (IRCVN-Universitat de Barcelona), Gisela Drossbach (Universität Augsburg), Thomas Ertl (Freie Universität Berlin), Thomas Frank (Università di Pavia), Marina Gazzini (Università di Milano), Nikolas Jaspert (Universität Heidelberg), Salvatore Marino (IRCVN-Universitat de Barcelona)