

Tell Them Yourself: It's Not Your Day to Die

Frank Butler, Kevin O'Connor, Jeff Butler. *Tell Them Yourself: It's Not Your Day to Die*. Breakaway Media; May 2024. 304 pages, hardcover. ISBN: 79-8-9902257-0-1.

Review by Scott P. Graverson, PhD

That men do not learn very much from the lessons of history is the most important of all the lessons of history.

—Aldous Huxley

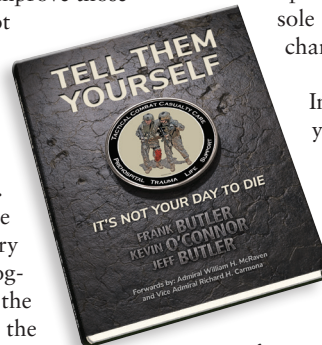
In *Tell Them Yourself: It's Not Your Day to Die*, authors Frank Butler, Kevin O'Connor, and Jeff Butler quote—and stress—an Army Ranger truism: “Lessons Learned aren’t really Lessons Learned—unless you actually learn the lesson.” In no other profession does this adage have more dire consequences than in medicine; the outcomes are literally life or death. As the authors of this book document, medical science has walked back medical advances—from using tourniquets to control bleeding to using fresh whole blood as a battlefield remedy. This book focuses not on placing blame on those who repeated best practices in favor of other solutions but on documenting the fight to correct those inaccuracies and the path to codify and continuously improve those practices solely for the benefit of the patient and not the convenience or benefit of the practitioner.

The authors begin with Dr. Bob Mabry giving his first-hand account of what it was like to fast-rope into an active combat scenario: treating casualties while enemy combatants aggressively attack you. At the time, Mabry was a Sergeant First Class in the U.S. Army Special Forces, an “18-Delta” in military parlance. The scenario: the infamous Battle of Mogadishu that occurred 3–4 October 1993. One of the primary takeaways from that battle, at least from the medical perspective, was a compelling need to rethink every aspect of combat casualty care, from the equipment we send into the field with the medics to how battlefield and in-garrison medical treatment facilities respond.

The opening of the book provides the backdrop for the genesis of the Committee on Tactical Combat Casualty Care and the evolution and implementation of Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC), first in Army Special Forces, then in the “Big” Army, and ultimately in all branches of the U.S. Military. The authors were on the front lines of the battle to implement sweeping changes in combat medicine, citing success after success in reducing preventable combat deaths—the ultimate goal of TCCC. One can imagine that implementing radical change is usually met with skepticism and great resistance. The battle for TCCC was no different; the authors document the battles they fought within Special Operations Forces (SOF) and with other governmental agencies. To be sure, no agency is fond of an “outsider” treading on their territory, and the authors detail the resistance they faced and overcame.

TCCC isn’t just for SOF . . . it’s for *everyone*. The authors explain that TCCC concepts apply to conventional forces, first responders, Special Weapons and Tactics teams, wilderness medicine, austere medicine . . . you name it. Foreign militaries have adopted and actively use TCCC principles in combat and training scenarios—Israel, Canada, the United Kingdom, China, NATO, and Ukraine have all benefited from adopting TCCC protocols. The authors detail accounts of lives saved—both civilian and first responders—because cities like Chicago, Houston, Cincinnati, and Denver had simply issued tourniquets and provided critical training to their officers.

You can’t have the good and the bad without the ugly. The authors aren’t afraid to expose the failings of TCCC, but they do so with purpose. To know what one needs to fix, one must expose the broken, and who better know this than the practitioners on the front lines of the fight? The authors give clear commentary on some aspects of TCCC that didn’t work out very well, with the sole purpose of improving processes and implementing change for the benefit of our combat forces.



In the words of Sir Winston Churchill, “The longer you can look back, the farther you can look forward.” Anyone who has spent a minute in SOF medicine—or medicine in general—will benefit from reading this book. The authors are purposeful in their prose and diligent in researching and sourcing this book. They are the experts because they were there and made it happen. The forwards in this book, from Admiral William McRaven,

former Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command, Joint Special Operations Command, and architect of the Osama bin Laden raid, and Vice Admiral Richard Carmona, 17th Surgeon General of the United States, testify to the veracity of this book. Knowing where you came from directs your path forward; knowing the character of the people who went before you gives you the peace of mind to know you are doing the right thing. This book delivers those insights and perspective.

This reviewer learned more about the SOF, SOF medicine, and the people who made TCCC happen reading this book than in the 30-plus years he spent in and around the military. Admittedly, this reviewer spent the majority of that time in the Communications—Computer profession, but if the authors can engage and teach an “IT guy” their stories, lessons, and adventures, then every SOF medical practitioner will find value in this book. This reviewer highly recommends *Tell Them Yourself: It's Not Your Day to Die* to anyone in tactical medicine—from the greenest medic to the most experienced surgeon. There is something for everyone in this true, historical account of TCCC.



J_SO_M

JOURNAL of SPECIAL OPERATIONS MEDICINE™



Spring 2024
Volume 24, Edition 1

THE JOURNAL FOR OPERATIONAL MEDICINE AND TACTICAL CASUALTY CARE



Inside this Issue:

- › FEATURE ARTICLES: TPT2 Pressures
- › Tourniquet Practices: Lessons from the War in Ukraine
- › SOP for MWD Blood Collection, Storage, and Transport
- › Checklist for Bifemoral VV ECMO Cannula Placement in Operational Environments
- › EFWBT in Austere Environments › Heat Tolerance Testing and Return to Duty
- › Comparison of Whole Blood Collection Techniques
- › Low-Titer O Whole Blood Walking Blood Banks
- › Tourniquets in the Russo-Ukrainian War › Wound Irrigation in Austere Environments
- › Sterile Instrument Storage in Austere Environments › Deployed Methoxyflurane Use
- › Rib Fractures in the Combat Environment
- › ONGOING SERIES: Prolonged Casualty Care, Unconventional Resilience, The World of Special Operations Medicine, TCCC Updates, Book Review, and more!

*Dedicated to the
Indomitable Spirit,
Lessons Learned &
Sacrifices of the
SOF Medic*