

Response Page

The following response was posted on the H-France discussion list in response to Emma Kuby's review of Jennifer Johnson, *The Battle for Algeria: Sovereignty, Health Care, and Humanitarianism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

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The original review may be found on the H-France Review web site at:
<http://www.h-france.net/vol17reviews/vol17no149kuby.pdf>.

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Andrew Knapp

a.f.knapp@reading.ac.uk

Dear colleagues

I read this with great interest, having myself had a wholly peripheral involvement in medical care in Algeria.

In 1973, and again in 1974, I worked as a volunteer with a Save the Children Fund team in Messaad, on the edge of the Sahara, about 80 km south-east of Djelfa. Our team was housed in the former SAS at the top of the town, and our director was a former British Army major whose last posting had been in Aden in 1967. We had 2-3 British health visitors and about 10 Algerian staff ranging from aides-soignants to drivers (though one at least of the drivers was also very competent with BCG vaccinations). There were also boys who were briefed to let us know of any difficult birth that the local *sages-femmes* needed help with.

Our main problem was widespread TB and the fact that children in a transhumant population, moving regularly between the town and flocks and even fields in the semi-desert, too frequently began but failed to finish the long courses of antibiotics then required. So relapses were frequent.

To the best of my knowledge (and I was young and my visits lasted 3 months at most) this was the total extent of healthcare in a town of, we thought, about 20,000 people (certainly more now). One Algerian doctor, separate from our team, arrived during my second stay, and charged substantial fees for a consultation. So whatever medical assistance the FLN may or may not have built up in Messaad during the war, there was no evidence of it a decade after independence.

If anyone wishes to ask me for further unreliable recollections, I should be happy to help, on or off list.

Best,

Andrew Knapp

a.f.knapp@reading.ac.uk