How did Navy Medical End up on the Ground in France in World War I?

The United States Marine Corps is a component of the United States Navy under the Department of the Navy. The Medical Department of the Navy is administered by the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED), Navy Department. The Bureau was authorized by an act of Congress in 1842. The BUMED is headed by a Chief of Bureau who is the Surgeon General of the Navy in 4-year terms of service, appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.

William Clarence Braised was the Surgeon General of the Navy during WWI. During the war, the Navy and Marine Corps numbered 600,000. The Navy BUMED provides for the medical care of the Marine Corps; there are no Marine doctors, dentists, or corpsmen. Where Marines go, so goes Navy Medical.

Statue USRS 1621 authorized the transfer of the USMC from the jurisdiction of the Navy Department to the War Department, effected by Executive Order and authorizes transfer of the required quota of Navy medical personnel to serve those marines. As such, Navy medical personnel perform duty with the Navy, Army, and Marine Corps at the same time. They are the only personnel in the military who may be shifted from one branch to the other. When serving with the Marines or Army, they wear the uniform of the service branch they are serving with and are subject to the same record-keeping system and awards system of that service branch. Thus, when serving with the Army in the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe, Navy medical personnel had to use the Army medical records system, and could be awarded Army decorations.

The above was compiled from information in Strott, 1947.