GCSE History – 'Britain: Health and the People, c1000 to the Present Day'

How far did surgery develop in the 20th century?

Task 1 – Examine the image of a First World War battlefield as it appears below. Use the image in order to create a spider diagram of medical problems / injuries that might result from the method of fighting witnessed here.

Medical problems caused by the First World War

Use of poison gas resulted in serious internal injuries to the lungs

Task 2 – Read the statement below and consider your response. Examine the series of facts on the cards on the second side of this sheet. You should read them carefully and colour code them according to the following;

'Developments in surgery during WWI were limited.'
How far do you agree?

GCSE History – 'Britain: Health and the People, c1000 to the Present Day'

Read through the cards below and use symbols/colours to categorise them into:

- examples of developments in surgery
- examples of limitations in surgery
- examples which are not relevant to this question.

X-ray machines were used by surgeons to see bullets and shrapnel which were deeply embedded in the body. These helped them to guide where they should operate.	Person to person transfusion was the only method of giving patients a blood transfusion at the start of the war. When thousands were wounded this was impossible to organise.	Many wounds which were not immediately fatal caused death once they became infected. The poor conditions in the trenches meant that bullets and shrapnel carried dirt deep into the body.
Surgeons had the chance to experiment with new techniques as millions were wounded in different ways.	Many soldiers gained bad head and face wounds due to the type of weaponry used in WWI. Surgeons were able to experiment on a large scale with brain surgery.	John Snow invented the chloroform inhaler in 1848 so that people could get a safe dosage of anaesthetic.
Sodium Citrate and Citrate Glucose were found to keep blood from clotting. It was also discovered that refrigerating blood kept it fresher for longer, so it could be stored.	Due to the huge demand for blood during the war, the government and scientists worked harder to create methods of storage.	Soldiers often broke their bones. A new invention was developed by Hugh Owen Thomas before the war to help keep the limb straight. This was called a splint - it helped the bone to heal in the correct position.
A blood depot was set up in advance of the Battle of Cambrai to provide a ready supply of blood. This was in anticipation of the huge amount who would be wounded and need transfusions.	In the 19th Century James Blundell tried to reintroduce blood transfusions in surgery.	Harold Gilles was able to experiment with plastic surgery. He created a new technique which used pedicle tube to help graft skin onto the face from another part of the body.