Rapid gene test identifies bacteria in battlefield wounds

After an American GI is wounded in combat, his or her life depends on the speed of evacuation, the degree to which blood loss can be stanched, and the skill with which military surgeons can clean, patch and stitch.

But it also depends on a factor that's even harder to predict, especially when a wound has been inflicted on foreign soil and in the fog of war: the microorganisms — viruses, bacteria and fungi — that find their way into the service member's wound and take up residence there.

New research suggests that physicians treating future U.S. troops (and perhaps those treating some of today's wounded warriors) may be able to take a fast and thorough census of the microorganisms living in a combat wound and tailor their treatment accordingly.

Within 24 hours of a tissue sample's arrival at Lawrence Livermore, the system of microarrays described in the research was able to sort through some 8,100 microorganisms that had previously been genetically sequenced to find matches for microbes thriving in a wound.

Read the full, original story: Healing warriors by making a census of combat wounds' microbiota