A giant step forward in the field of medicine, antibiotics saved millions of lives by killing and preventing the growth of harmful bacteria. Scientists like Louis Pasteur and Joseph Lister were the first to recognize and attempt to combat bacteria, but it was Alexander Fleming who made the first leap in antibiotics when he accidentally discovered the bacteria-inhibiting mold known as penicillin in 1928. Antibiotics proved to be a major improvement on antiseptics—which killed human cells along with bacteria—and their use spread rapidly throughout the 20th century. Nowhere was their effect more apparent than on the battlefield: While nearly 20 percent of soldiers who contracted bacterial pneumonia died in World War I, with antibiotics that number dropped to only 1 percent during World War II. Antibiotics like penicillin, vancomycin, cephalosporin and streptomycin have gone on to fight nearly every known form of infection, including influenza, malaria, meningitis, tuberculosis and most sexually transmitted diseases.