

Swine Flu and the Great Flu Pandemic of 1918-19

The Similarities and What History Can Teach Us

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The Great Flu Pandemic of 1918-19 killed more people than any other outbreak of disease in history. It is estimated that between 50 and 100 million died from what was then known as “Spanish Flu”. It most often killed those in the prime of life, and it killed with extraordinary swiftness, often causing great trauma to the lungs.

The events of the past week have given us cause for concern that there may be another pandemic flu on the horizon. The Swine Flu or H1-N1 as it is being named, has several important characteristics that validate this concern. First, it is a “novel” or new virus. In the world of epidemiology this means that it is a strain that the world has not been seen before and therefore people will not have had exposure to it in the past. This means that we do not have natural antibodies against this virus, no natural immunity. H1N1 refers to the specific genetic makeup of the virus. The Spanish Flu was also an H1N1 type A influenza virus. As of this writing, there have been many deaths in Mexico and many confirmed, but milder, cases here in the US just this past week. A usual seasonal flu in fact kills tens of thousands of people every year. Those that fall victim to usual or seasonal flu, however, are the elderly and the very young. A characteristic feature of a Pandemic is that it kills young, healthy adults in the prime of their life.

The feeling of most experts is that this will be the first of a few “waves” of this epidemic, just as what occurred during the Spanish Flu. The Spanish Flu actually began in early 1917 but did not appear at first to be very serious. No-one raised the alarm during those early months. The second most deadly wave began in late 1917 and killed most of its victims in 1918. Note the similarities to what we are seeing with this H1N1 Swine Flu. Most people are hearing that it is “mild.” However, because it is novel and this is just the first wave, we must be hypervigilant and follow the epidemiology of this virus very closely.

Currently it looks as if this virus is sensitive to two main anti-viral agents (Tamiflu and Relenza). There is currently no vaccine and that would take many months to mass-produce. One of the greatest problems facing conventional medicine is the amount of time required to identify and manufacture drugs and vaccines capable of helping manage a deadly outbreak of flu. The virus may drift or change by the time a vaccine was made available, so this, too, must be closely monitored. Viruses mutate or change their form quickly and develop resistance to drugs and vaccines over time. Will this happen? All these are questions we must ask and trust the experts to monitor. So what can Americans learn from the Pandemic of 1918-19 that could guide us now? Were there any treatments that helped stem the tide of that killer?

A recent comprehensive epidemiological study of some 61,000 confirmed cases of Spanish Flu from 1918-19 by Canadian physician, Dr. Andre Saine, shows that patients treated with a form of medicine called homeopathy had death rates of 0.7 percent

compared to death rates in the untreated and from conventional care of 30 percent or more. Is homeopathy something that we should be looking into and investigating as a possible source of prevention and cure for this H1N1 virus? If history is said to repeat itself, then the answer must be, yes. We owe it to the people we serve to investigate all possible treatments and cures, regardless of how popular they may or may not be to drug companies or within mainstream medicine. That is the way of science: to investigate without bias or prejudice and make objective decisions based on facts.

Homeopathy is a 200 year-old system of medicine based on a law of nature first discovered by Hippocrates and others. That law states that substances able to produce symptoms of disease can cure those symptoms in a sick person. In the US, the medicines used in homeopathy are produced in pharmacies under strict FDA regulations. They are non-toxic, gentle and inexpensive. It is also relatively easy to mass-produce these drugs in the event of a national crisis. The system itself is unlike any other system of medicine known to man. In fact, sophisticated new research released by the material science labs at Penn State University in 2006 and 2007 is just beginning to explain its extraordinary potential. There are hundreds of high quality, peer reviewed pre-clinical and clinical studies published in journals like *Pediatrics*, *Rheumatology*, *Lancet*, *CHEST*, and others showing that homeopathy works. Additionally, there is solid epidemiological data to suggest that homeopathy's success in 1918-19 was not an aberration. Reliable medical records from deadly epidemics throughout the 19th century of cholera, diphtheria, yellow fever, dengue fever, scarlet fever, typhoid, malaria and other infectious diseases repeatedly show that homeopathy was a very effective system for treating disease evidenced by mortality rates a small fraction of those seen in untreated as well conventionally treated patients. Homeopathy shines in the face of epidemics. That is what put homeopathy onto the map and began a system of healthcare that flourished here in the US, in Europe, and in India. Homeopathy is in fact experiencing a world-wide resurgence because it is effective in treating both chronic and epidemic disease. Few people know that the renowned Hahnemann Hospital in Philadelphia was in fact founded in honor of the father of homeopathy. Many medical schools and hospitals at the turn of the 20th century were homeopathic hospitals.

So the question is – could homeopathy help again? Could it help prevent the massive loss of life anticipated by the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization from the next pandemic?

Epidemic disease tends to have a rather fixed nature. The symptoms of each individual epidemic are often fairly uniform across populations. Homeopathy uses a very particular technique for discovering the treatment and cure for epidemics. This approach is the same, regardless of the nature of the epidemic. Homeopaths gather the specifics of a number of human cases with the disease. The symptoms of each case will be carefully recorded with attention paid to distinguishing or unusual characteristics of each case (i.e., whether the cough is dry or wet, the specific nature of any pains, the side of the chest most effected, the conditions that make the symptoms better or worse, the nature and time of chills and fever, etc., etc.). It is these precise details gathered on a small representation of the affected population that tell us the remedy or remedies that will be most useful in the epidemic. Armed then with this information, homeopathic physicians will be able to

identify a small number of medicines effective for treating the vast majority of cases in any full scale pandemic. A little known fact is that these same medicines can be used to PREVENT the illness as well. This is called “homeoprophylaxis.”

Homeopathic medicine is very different. The homeopathic drugs needed for any outbreak of infectious disease are already available and can be manufactured quickly in quantities sufficient to treat very large numbers. The manufacturing process is sophisticated, but uncomplicated.

According to the CDC and the World Health Organization, millions are at risk of dying should a pandemic strike again. With the H1N1 Swine Flu, this reality now appears to be closer at hand. We must turn over any stone and investigate any system of medicine that has the potential to save lives. Homeopathy is such a system. Its proven track record must no longer be ignored. Its history is clear and we have the capability to treat masses of people infected or at risk of being infected by this Flu.

For more information about homeopathy and the flu or to find a homeopathic practitioner, contact the National Center for Homeopathy in Alexandria, Virginia (www.nationalcenterforhomeopathy.org). This non-profit organization is the organizing body for homeopathic medicine in America. Also if any of your members know of someone with a confirmed case of Swine Flu that would be willing to share their symptoms, please contact Peter Gold from NCH at peter_gold@goldorluk.com. Gathering accurate symptoms from confirmed cases is extremely important at this time.