The Flu- Justin Ng

What progress!? Anyone who’s ever had the flu knows that the medical progress has not come very far. Although doctors can carry out heart transplants and mice can grow ears on their backs- no herb to fight against the flu has been found. We still have to suffer, just like our ancestors in the Middle Ages did, or that is how it at least seems.

It’s a strange name: to distinguish itself from the flu- infection, the big sister calls herself the ‘real’ flu. Both are triggered by viruses, lead to fever, headaches and aching limbs. Both are accompanied by a runny nose, coughing and hoarseness. The biggest difference is in the severity of the suffering- with the real flu, the fever rises to 40 degrees, the feeling is miserable. Annually about 10000 people die in Germany from the disease – predominantly the elderly or people who are already suffering medically and are practically dead. Anyone who wants to be more distinguished calls their flu ‘influenza’. However, this is misleading because the term is derived from *Influenza di freddo ab* which in Italian means the influence of the cold. Yet, the flu never goes back to the cold, this impression only arises because people freeze shortly before the outbreak of the disease. Every few decades (so around 1918 with the so- called Spanish flu) flu epidemics sweep around the world and claim millions of lives. How and why these epidemics arise and where they come from is still unknown to today’s scientists, as it was during the plague outbreaks in the Middle Ages.

The possibilities of therapy are quite limited nowadays. What is not helpful against the flu, apart from soup, is common knowledge: without a doctor’s visit it lasts two weeks or 14 days.