

QUERY ORIGIN OF EPIDEMIC

Is it Spanish Influenza or Just Another Form of Grippe?

MEDICAL MEN UNCERTAIN

Health Authorities Think Cases Not More Danger- ous Than Measles

Medical authorities differ as to whether the so-called "Spanish influenza" is caused by a different organism or is merely the well-known "grippe" again appearing in a slightly different form. The Provincial and Toronto Medical Health Officers, however, are certain that the present epidemic is over-rated and is no more dangerous than measles, scarlet fever or other fevers.

"Every outbreak of grippe since 1898 has varied to a considerable extent," said Dr. C. J. Hastings, M.O. H., last night. Some seasons the outbreak has led, in its serious form, to bronchial pneumonia, while in other epidemics the disease has scarcely affected the respiratory system, but has appeared in intestinal complications.

"Such a variation leads one to suppose," the doctor said, "that this is just another form of the old disease."

Advice to Patients.

For those who believe they have contracted the disease, Dr. Hastings suggested that they should yield to it; remain indoors in a uniform temperature, and conserve their strength by taking an absolute rest. The malady runs its course in three, four or five days at the outside.

Those who have it in a mild form by continuing their work are liable to get extra cold, which may lead to complications.

When asked if the conservation of fuel, by not lighting the furnaces as early as usual, was responsible for the epidemic, Dr. Hastings said he did not think so, except where persons neglected to clothe themselves properly.

In this connection the local M.O. H. made some suggestions regarding underclothing. People, he stated, were most liable to catch colds in the fall, before the houses were heated, and in the spring, after the heating was discontinued. These were the times when the warmest underclothing should be worn. During the very cold weather people lived, or worked, in almost summer temperatures, and light underclothing should be worn, care being taken to don lots of heavy outer clothes before going outdoors. "Most people," said the doctor, "make the mistake of putting on 'winter' underclothing after the cold weather has set in and their homes are heated."

Dr. McCullough's Statement.

After discussing with the Provincial Secretary the possibility of an outbreak of the so-called Spanish influenza in Ontario, Dr. J. W. S. McCullough, Provincial Officer of Health, issued the following statement yesterday:

"The Provincial Board of Health is of the opinion that the public should not be unduly alarmed about Spanish influenza. A circular descriptive of the disease has been mailed to every physician and M. O. H. in the Province.

"There is no evidence that the disease is as dangerous as measles, scarlet fever, or many other of the communicable diseases. It probably spreads by close contact with persons affected, as in street and railway cars and public assemblages. It is impracticable to quarantine affected persons, as the disease, being of short duration (two or three days), would be over before measures of quarantine could be made effective.

"By some authorities it is recommended that a nasal spray of Dobell's solution may be used two or three times a day. The best precaution is, however, found in avoiding close contact with those who appear to have colds or influenza, by staying away from public gatherings, and by avoiding crowded street cars. It is advisable to eat moderately, take plenty of outdoor exercise, sleep with windows open, drink lots of good water, and do not get excited about newspaper reports.

"Soldiers living in tents are much better off in this weather than those quartered in barracks, provided, of course, that plenty of air is admitted.

"The board is watching the course of the disease elsewhere, and is neglecting nothing it believes to be in the interest of the public health."