

# The Enduring Impact of the Spanish Flu: Evolution of Global Health Care

Jorge Tomsho\*

Department of Medicine and Surgery, University of Barcelona, Monza, Italy

## DESCRIPTION

The Spanish flu, also known as the 1918 influenza pandemic, remains one of the deadliest pandemics in recorded history, causing unprecedented global mortality and social disruption. The study examines into the origins, spread, impact and lessons learned from this catastrophic event, providing a comprehensive understanding of its significance in shaping public health responses. The Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-1919 was caused by an H1N1 influenza A virus. Despite its name, the pandemic did not originate in Spain. The moniker "Spanish flu" emerged because Spain, a neutral country during World War I, had a free press that reported extensively on the outbreak, unlike the war-engaged countries where censorship was common.

## Phases of the pandemic

**First wave (Spring 1918):** The initial wave was relatively mild. Infected individuals experienced typical flu symptoms such as fever, fatigue and cough.

**Second wave (Autumn 1918):** The second wave was far more lethal. The virus had mutated into a more virulent strain, causing severe symptoms, including intense pneumonia and hemorrhaging.

**Third wave (Winter 1918-1919):** The third wave was less severe than the second but still deadly. It continued to claim lives and spread rapidly until it eventually subsided in the summer of 1919.

## Symptoms and mortality

One of the most puzzling aspects of the Spanish flu was its high mortality rate among healthy young adults aged 20-40, unlike most flu strains, which primarily affect the very young and elderly. This unusual mortality pattern is believed to result from a cytokine storm, an overreaction of the immune system that causes widespread inflammation and tissue damage.

Estimates of the death toll range from 50 million to 100 million people globally, with some suggesting even higher numbers. The

exact figure remains uncertain due to incomplete records and varying methods of calculation. Nevertheless, the Spanish flu killed more people than World War I, highlighting its devastating impact.

## Global impact

**Public health systems:** The pandemic overwhelmed healthcare systems, exposing their limitations and prompting the development of more robust public health infrastructures. Many hospitals were understaffed and ill-equipped to handle the surge in patients, leading to high mortality rates.

**Economic disruption:** The pandemic caused significant economic disruption. Many businesses shut down due to high illness rates among workers and essential services were strained.

**Quarantine and isolation:** Infected individuals were isolated and quarantine measures were enforced to contain the spread of the virus. These measures were more successful in rural areas than in densely populated urban centers.

**Public health campaigns:** Governments and health organizations launched public health campaigns to educate people about hygiene practices, such as handwashing and the use of face masks.

## CONCLUSION

The Spanish flu's symptoms were more severe than those of typical influenza. In addition to standard flu symptoms, many patients developed acute respiratory distress, severe pneumonia and cyanosis (a bluish discoloration of the skin due to lack of oxygen). Hemorrhaging from the nose, mouth and intestines was also reported. The Spanish flu of 1918 was a tragic and transformative event in human history. Its unprecedented mortality and global impact highlighted the vulnerabilities of societies to infectious diseases. The lessons learned from the Spanish flu have shaped modern public health strategies and preparedness plans, emphasizing the importance of vigilance, cooperation and investment in healthcare.

**Correspondence to:** Jorge Tomsho, Department of Medicine and Surgery, University of Barcelona, Monza, Italy, Email: jorge.tom@unimb.it

**Received:** 28-May-2024, Manuscript No. VMID-24-32263; **Editor assigned:** 31-May-2024, Pre QC No. VMID-24-32263 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 15-Jun-2024, QC No. VMID-24-32263; **Revised:** 21-Jun-2024, Manuscript No. VMID-24-32263 (R); **Published:** 28-Jun-2024, DOI: 10.35248/2161-0517.24.13.287

**Citation:** Tomsho J (2024) The Enduring Impact of the Spanish Flu: Evolution of Global Health Care. *Virology & Mycology*. 13:287

**Copyright:** © 2024 Tomsho J. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.