

## FIVE CENTURIES OF MEDICAL ME BAFFLED BY INFLUENZA

Although there is still discussion in medical circles as to the exact type of bacterial organism which cause influenza, the disease has been recognized and treated for years. This statement was made by Dr. Allard, health officer, to counteract a general popular impression that doctors do not know anything about influenza.

"Health officials have investigated but have been unable to learn where this invasion originated," said Dr. Allard. "It is clearly evident that many have been informed wrongly from the number of statements that are made concerning medical knowledge of influenza." To show the illusion that many are under, the United States health service from information gained from the study of former epidemics, sent out bulletins warning physicians concerning the epidemic before it ever appeared in the United States.

The present epidemic was transmitted from Europe to America in the early part of August. When it reached epidemic proportions in the eastern part of the United States we were practically certain that it would appear here due to the fact that Billings is on the main lines of travel between the eastern and western parts of the United States. Before even one case had appeared in this city, the health board through the Billings Gazette, announced the symptoms of the disease and precautionary measures for the prevention of its spread.

**Disease Spread Rapidly.**

Although Dr. Allard was ill with influenza during the epidemic here, he has been in constant touch with the situation. From the daily reports received at his office he has made a chart showing the course of the epidemic since it appeared here. In the main the conclusions drawn from this chart bear out the information that

**was previously published by the United States health service. The epidemic came on suddenly, reaching an average of 115 new cases within a few days after the first cases were reported. This average was maintained for about 10 days. There was a sudden drop from an average of 115 cases to approximately 40 cases between November 6 and November 7. The sudden decrease is an exception to the general run of epidemics and can probably be explained by the fact that a storm occurred in this section about that time. Since then there has been a gradual falling off in the number of new cases.**

**Rumors Dismissed.**

Some conclusions like the following have been drawn from the present epidemic," continued Dr. Allard. "Those who have had the disease probably will remain immune for six months. More than any of the other epidemics of which there were four in the last century, the present epidemic seemed to be prevalent with pneumonia complications. A large proportion of the deaths that have occurred in Billings have been due to this cause.

"Even though the health board believes that the epidemic has abated sufficiently to issue the reopening order there is still danger from the disease. Those who have had influenza should stay away from public gatherings as much as possible. It is believed that one who has had the disease may carry the infection and give it to others for some time after he is able to be up and around. Everyone should be particular when sneezing and coughing to use a handkerchief, for it is by sneezing, and coughing that the disease is spread.

**Not a New Disease.**

Influenza can be traced back with considerable accuracy. During the last century four pandemics spread throughout the world. The first came in 1830-33, the second in 1836-37, the third in 1847-48 and the fourth in 1888-90. Pandemics are usually followed by epidemics or sporadic outbreaks of the disease in different regions, so that nearly every year there are at least a few cases of so-called influenza.

"The present epidemic which is assuming pandemic proportions appeared first in western Asia according to some authorities and according to others the first cases were reported in Spain. It prevailed during the last summer in both the armies of the allies and the central powers. It attacked from 25 to 40 per cent of the people of Germany, Italy, England and Ireland. It began to assume epidemic proportions here early in August, and was probably brought here by patients from Europe."

## MERCHANTS ARE PREPARING FOR RECORD SEASON

Coincident with the lifting of quarantine and approach of the holiday season, local merchants are preparing for one of the heaviest business months in the history of the city.

# Influenza Epidemic Still Baffles

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