



Editor's note

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For interest sake, concluding pages of articles may contain "newsy" items of the original date.

Gilbert E. D'Alonzo, DO, May 2000

Osteopathic Success in the Treatment of Influenza and Pneumonia

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(Paper before the Chicago Session of the A. O. A. July, 1919)

THIS is an interesting and a happy hour. Those of us who five years ago were in Philadelphia at the convention at about this time will realize the terrific tense feeling that was then present, and will remember that if a person was not found in and about the halls of the hotel that you could

most likely find him out on Broad Street looking with almost fear at the bulletins as they were placed on the boards. That was the time when government after government was declaring war. That was in the city of Brotherly Love, and our Association was meeting there to discuss its prob-

lems. Today we are meeting in the great empire city of the Middle West, whose motto is "I will," at the very time when peace has been declared. Many events have taken place in that five years, and it is about some of these events which I will endeavor to speak today.

The world has just passed through two terrific scourges: The World War, and the Influenza-Pneumonia pandemic. Both were of such gigantic proportions that it is now difficult for our minds to react to the ordinary common-place things and events. We vividly recall the terrible shock to the world mind, caused by the news of the then awful disaster, the sinking of the *Titanic*, in which upwards of 1,500 lost their lives. Scarcely another subject was mentioned on the front pages of our dailies for two or three days thereafter. The gloom was almost palpable.

Shortly thereafter came the World War and the *Titanic* disaster soon sank into insignificance in comparison with many of the daily losses in battle. Our minds became hardened to the loss of life and only events of appalling proportions attracted our attention. And so the days went by until the toll of death was recorded not by hundreds, nor thousands, but by millions.

Picture, if you can, a World service flag of sufficient proportions to include an ordinary sized star for each soldier and sailor mobilized by the several belligerent nations. Some 41,113,650 stars would be on that flag, 7,582,300 would be gold stars, representing that many battle deaths. This slaughter covered a period of practically four and a quarter years.

The Influenza-Pneumonia pandemic,—including the recrudescence—covered a period of only about six or eight months, yet within that time hardly a family in the whole world but what some member, immediate or more remote, was stricken. Estimates have been made that 10,000,000 deaths resulted from these two diseases within that short six or eight months.

Do you grasp the full meaning of that statement?

The World War lasted four and a quarter years, during which time the majority of the people, including the greatest minds of the world, were devoting their whole time

and efforts to the destruction of their fellow men. Billions upon billions of dollars were spent for that purpose. The result of that time, that energy, that money, was over 7,500,000 deaths from battle. But as great, as shocking, as horrifying as that is, it does not begin to compare with the destructiveness of those two diseases, Influenza and Pneumonia, which in about as many months as the war lasted years, it appears killed some 10,000,000 human beings, and no one can estimate the destruction and suffering that will follow from the insidious sequelae.

Our National Government and the Insurance Companies have estimated that 500,000 of our own citizens lost their lives as a result of this epidemic. Our entire war casualty list, including not only every battle death, but every wound, every scratch that required a hospital dressing, did not reach 300,000. But these two diseases, in about one-third of the time covered by our casualty list, actually caused the death of 500,000 of our citizens, ten times our death list over-seas, and almost twice our entire casualty list. Do you grasp the terribleness of this appalling fact?

What part did we as a profession have in combating this scourge? And what lessons have this scourge and our experience therewith done for us as a professional body, for us whose life work is devoted to the care of the sick?

It has been difficult, indeed, my friends, to get accurate and complete information upon which conclusions can be based. In the first place, there are so very many of the States in which Influenza and Pneumonia are not reportable diseases, and many in which even deaths are not compulsorily reportable, which precludes a complete and accurate survey. In the second place, it has been impossible to get replies from all of those from whom information was sought.

Requests for information as to the number of cases of Influenza, the number of cases of Pneumonia, and the number of deaths from each, were sent to every State Health Commissioner and every City Health Commissioner in cities of 40,000 population and over. One hundred and forty-eight replies were received. Many did not reply. Many reports received were incomplete for the reason that Influenza and Pneumonia are not reportable diseases in some States.

Sufficient data, however, including reports from 24 State Health Commissioners, have been received in the replies of those 148 Health Commissioners, together with the estimates of the National Census Bureau and the several Insurance Companies, to warrant the ultra conservative estimate of 5 per cent to 6 per cent of fatalities in Influenza cases under medicinal care. In Boston the influenza fatalities amounted to 27 per cent, as reported by the Health Commissioner of that city.

These reports also show a conservative estimate of 28 per cent of fatalities in Pneumonia cases under medicinal care, and in some large centers it ran as high as 55 to 73 per cent. As officially compiled to date, the fatalities in epidemic Pneumonia in our Army camps amount to 34½ per cent.

Here in Chicago you had 24,144 cases of Influenza with 8,148 deaths, or a 14½ per cent Influenza mortality. There were also 21,825 cases of epidemic pneumonia, with 5,717 deaths, or a 26 per cent Pneumonia mortality.

In the city of New York there were 160,945 cases of Influenza with 15,848 deaths, or a 9.8 per cent mortality, and 28,731 cases of epidemic Pneumonia with 18,263 deaths, or a 64 per cent Pneumonia mortality. These figures are exact, for in both cities these two diseases are reportable.

What do these figures mean? They mean that in every 1,000 cases of Influenza in Chicago, 146 cases died—in every 1,000 cases of Pneumonia, 270 died. In New York, in every 1,000 cases of Pneumonia, 640 died, and that out of every 1,000 cases of Pneumonia in our Army, 345 died, the very flower of our young manhood.

Such experiences under medicinal care naturally make us wonder what were the results obtained under osteopathic care.

As you know, a letter containing a blank questionnaire on Influenza and Pneumonia was sent last November to all practicing osteopathic physicians in the United States and Canada. Strict and emphasized instructions were given to report only definite and well developed cases, and to report all such, together with all fatalities.

All told, 2,445 osteopathic physicians have reported, every State and Canada being represented. These 2,445 osteopathic physicians, representing every section of the

country, the small towns as well as the large cities, report having treated 110,132 cases of Influenza with only 267 deaths, or a mortality of only ¼ of 1 per cent. They also reported having cared for 8,253 cases of epidemic Pneumonia with only 835 deaths, or a Pneumonia mortality of only 10 per cent. Some fifty of these deaths occurred within twenty-four hours after the osteopathic physicians were called. This is a sufficient number of cases to warrant intelligent and conservative conclusions and comparisons.

Taken by themselves, these figures show that in every 1,000 cases of Influenza treated by osteopathy, only 2½ died. They mean that in every 1,000 cases of epidemic Pneumonia, only 100 died. In other words, if you had Influenza, there were 400 chances to 1 in favor of your recovery if you were treated by osteopathy; but only 19 to 1 in favor of your recovery if treated by medicine. Or if you lived here in Chicago and were under medicinal care, your chances of recovery would have been only 4 to 1, while if you lived in New York, the chances would have been only 9 to 1.

Now, if you had epidemic pneumonia and were being treated by osteopathy, you would, according to the above statistics, have had 9 chances to 1 in favor of your recovery, but if living here in Chicago and being treated by medicine, your chances would have been only 3 to 1, while in New York there would have been 3 chances in your favor and 2 chances against your recovery.

Representing the profession Mr. President, I make announcement of these figures with no boastfulness, but with a spirit of humility and regret that we were unable to keep the mortality down to our normal level of 2 per cent in Pneumonia.

I do feel, however, that we are justified in taking a pardonable pride in what we have been able to do in these Pandemics in comparison with what the medical men of the country did, and especially so, in view of the bitter opposition waged by the American Medical Association against the passage by Congress of the bill making licensed osteopathic physicians eligible to take the regular examination for commissions in the Medical Department of the Army and Navy.

There were more than 500 licensed osteopathic physicians in the Army and Navy

doing only the work of the private. When the epidemics were raging and the boys were literally dying by the thousands, were not these 500 licensed osteopathic physicians with their professional training, ordered to help care for the afflicted? They were not. Why not? Because their degree was D. O. instead of M. D. When the boys out at the Great Lakes and out at Camp Grant, and Camp Benjamin Harrison, and Camp Sherman, and Camp Devens, and Camp Upton, and Camp Dix, and Camp Mead, and all the other Camps, when those boys were coming down by the thousands with Pneumonia and dying at the rate of 34 out of every 100, and the Medical staffs at the various camps were being worked to death, and were wholly inadequate to handle the large number of pneumonia cases, were not those licensed osteopathic physicians called to aid in saving those dying boys? They were not. Why? Because Surgeon-General Gorgas said that only physicians with the degree M. D. were eligible to enter his Medical Department in the U. S. Army. I, therefore, Mr. President, ask the citizens of your city of Chicago, and the citizens of the United States, this question:

If 330 or 340 out of every 1,000 Pneumonia cases under medical care died, and only 100 out of every 1,000 cases under osteopathic care died, who is responsible for those additional 240 deaths in every 1,000, the difference between the two records?

A further very interesting feature of these reports is the fact that so many of the osteopathic physicians reported that practically none of their patients contracted these diseases, who just preceding and at the time of the epidemic had been having more or less regular osteopathic treatment. In their opinion, the resistance of such patients was up to such a level that they were able to withstand the infection of the epidemic.

This data is of extreme importance economically.

One of the largest insurance companies, perhaps the largest, measured by the number of policies in force, estimates that the amount paid out by the insurance companies in death claims due to Influenza and Pneumonia, amounts to over \$100,000,000.

The War Risk Bureau estimates that these epidemics will cost the United States Government \$150,000,000 in insurance paid.

On the basis of the above mortality per-

centages, it is very easy to compute the saving that osteopathic care of these cases would have been to the insurance companies and the Government. The same principle applies to the Health Insurance Companies, for according to the above reports, the sum saved in sick benefits under osteopathic care, would conservatively amount to one-third of the sum paid under medical care.

Then, my fellow physicians, I wish to call attention to another very important reason, among the many, for your having a keen sense of pride in the work that you accomplished throughout these terrible epidemics. There is not an osteopathic physician in this audience, nor one in all those 2,445 physicians reporting, who cannot stand before his fellow men, before all the world, with chest up, head erect, eye beaming, and a consciousness that not one in all that army of 110,000 patients has become a drug addict through any professional act of his, while bringing them through those dreadful anxious hours during the Influenza or Pneumonia illness. Is not such a consciousness as that a joy to you, Mr. President? Is not it a joy to you to preside in your home city, over an Association whose members assumed the grave responsibility, when life was in the balance, and made good? And made good, mind you, without even exposing a single one of those patients to the danger of becoming a drug addict, one of those poor, pitiable unfortunates, whose moral backbone is gone, who will lie and deceive every member of his family—kill even—to obtain one more grain of those damnable drugs that have been the curse of millions of your fellow citizens.

Do I picture that too strong, my friends? I believe not. Why, right here in the bosom of your own fair city, in this year of our Lord, 1918-19, when some 80,000 of these, your fellow citizens, were sick unto death with Influenza and Pneumonia, and some 14,000 of them died, what took place? According to the report of a Committee of your City Health Department, which made an exhaustive study of the conditions surrounding Influenza and Pneumonia, they found in the files in 946 of the 1,200 drug stores of the city, 441,641 prescriptions written by the physicians with M. D. degrees, for those 80,000 neighbors of yours sick with Influenza and Pneumonia, and of that number of prescriptions 104,101

called for narcotics, the "dry" drugs that are producing all of this horrible, awful depravity among neighbors, friends, and relatives. Think of it, my friends, in this day when the United States Government and the State Governments are organizing to stamp out the drug evil, the physicians with M. D. degrees include dope in one-fourth of their prescriptions, thus laying the foundation, especially in weak, nervous patients, of forming this drug habit. It is fair to suppose that this picture of the practice in your city is a conservative estimate of what is being done by the profession all over the country.

Do any of your loved ones suffer with this drug affliction? If not, and you have never experienced the suffering and humiliation of it all, then hundreds of thousands of families of our great country will tell you it is hell on earth. And who is to blame? Let ex-President Bevan, and ex-President Vaughan, and ex-President Welch, and ex-President General Gorges of the

American Medical Association, with their glorified and hallowed M. D. degrees, stand up like men and answer.

Medical bigotry and medical politics have denied us so far the opportunity of doing in the Army, "the part for which we are best fitted," as expressed in the words of President Wilson. Everywhere and on every occasion, they tried to cast doubt upon our ability to do the work. But in these dreadful epidemics that have just passed, you, ladies and gentlemen, have shown that you are fitted, and are prepared, to cope with one of the most virulent and deadly of all diseases.

I want to say that never has my faith in the efficacy of osteopathy been so great as it is today. If we as a profession had never accomplished anything else than what we did in these epidemics, that alone would be sufficient to make the name of Dr. Still immortal.

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