

Sandra Perko

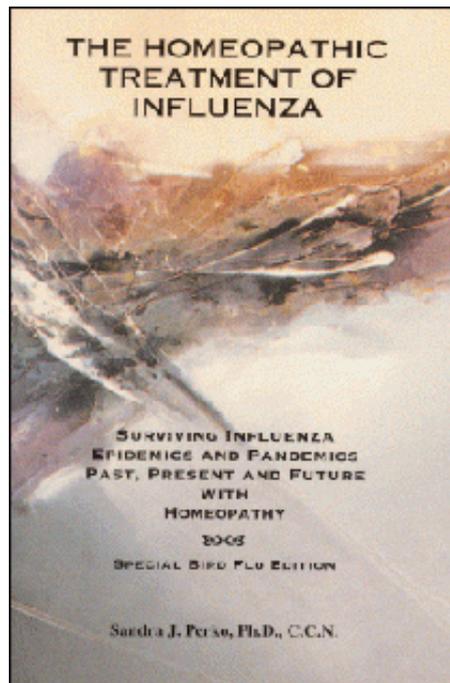
The Homeopathic Treatment of Influenza

Leseprobe

[The Homeopathic Treatment of Influenza](#)

von [Sandra Perko](#)

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Tel. +49 7626 9749 700
Email info@narayana-verlag.de
<http://www.narayana-verlag.de>



PART I

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THE LEGACY OF INFLUENZA

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PROLOGUE

He wasn't supposed to die. He was only twenty years old, a young soldier with the 42nd Infantry stationed at Camp Devens in Massachusetts. He was in the prime of life, health and vigor. At first, he thought he must have simply taken a cold when he went on sick call that early morning of September, 1918. He had suddenly developed a headache and a little dry cough. Then he began to feel feverish and achy. So he thought, just to be sure, he should report to the infirmary. He was assigned a bed in the base hospital and given some aspirin and told that the camp doctor would be along to examine him shortly. He should have been up and around and back on duty in three or four days. Instead, this young typical specimen of the ideal American soldier, within two hours of his admittance to the infirmary, was inexplicably dead!

Due to the fact that this young soldier's illness had come on so suddenly and because he had gone from the picture of health and vitality to death in a matter of a few hours, the camp's doctors felt that what had struck him down so suddenly was surely cerebrospinal meningitis. Yet, when day after day young men began showing up at the camp hospital with the same complaints, doctors began to fear that something else, something far more sinister was attacking these young men. Daily military hospital admissions were normally routinely small, but by the second day of September there were 31 admissions. The number jumped to 142 on the tenth day, and to an astounding 1,176 by the eighteenth day! Moreover, reports began to come in that the same mysterious disease was attacking army camps in numerous other cities in the country, as well as also affecting civilian populations in those cities.

The world was not prepared for what was about to descend upon it that September of 1918. Life around the turn of the twentieth century, before the first world war, was simple and tranquil. Rural doctors wore tailcoats and made their housecalls in a horse-drawn buggy. They presented their bills once a year to their patients whom they had known since birth, having personally delivered most of them. The majority were general practitioners whose offices were in their own homes and who were accustomed to

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being awakened in the middle of the night by an urgent patient who needed care. They set broken bones and even performed tonsillectomies at home, administering the anesthesia themselves. Yet, for many families, doctors were a luxury they could scarcely afford. Children were born at home and, even in an emergency, the nearest telephone was often miles away. The mail was only delivered once or twice a week. Very few homes had electricity, gas or running water. Only the wealthy had indoor plumbing. Outhouses, yards from the house, served as toilet facilities. Nighttime needs were served by “chamber pots,” or “slop jars” if you lived in the country. Most people went to bed and woke by the dictates of the sun. If one wanted to sit up past dark in the parlor, they used kerosene or coal-oil lamps. Cooking and heat was furnished by coal or wood-burning stoves.

It was the fifth year of what was supposed to be the “War to End All Wars.” The world was weary with hunger, food shortages and the casualties of the first truly *world* war humanity had ever known. It was in this global setting that the world was about to witness the most devastating influenza plague to ever befall mankind.

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INFLUENZA THROUGH THE AGES

Infectious diseases have periodically plagued mankind since the beginning of recorded history; among them cholera, yellow fever, small pox and typhus. These scourges by-and-large have been brought under control to the extent that they no longer decimate huge populations of the world. Yet, there remains one disease which has defied conquest despite world-wide scientific efforts to master it, a disease which periodically sweeps over the world with lightning speed. One disease capable of spreading illness and death in unparalleled proportions. It has been called "The Last Great Plague" -Influenza.

Influenza remains one of the ten leading causes of death in the United States, as pneumomia-influenza, and has an even greater mortality rate in many Third World countries. The symptoms of influenza are so common: fever, headache, sore, achy muscles, cough, sneezing, runny nose and watery eyes, that it is often mistaken for the common cold. Average cases of flu last up to a week or more, and are usually accompanied by varying degrees of weakness or exhaustion. We are so used to coexisting with this yearly virus that we have come to expect at least one bout with the flu each year as cold weather approaches. We have also come to expect that each year it will exact its customary death toll among the very young and the very old, as well as those unfortunate individuals with poor immune defenses.

When an infectious disease occurs in a given area and affects a large number of the population, it is called an epidemic. There are times in history when extremely virulent infections appear to almost simultaneously orbit the globe causing untold death and destruction on a world-wide scale. These infectious diseases are called *pandemics*. Ancient people did not know what was actually causing these epidemics and pandemics. Many believed that these sicknesses came from inside the body as evil spirits or what they called "bad vapors."

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Still others believed that these vapors were due to the release of poisonous gases from the interior of the earth following an earthquake or a volcanic eruption, so that when people became ill it was said that they “had the vapors.”

The fact that these diseases seemed to spread from one person to another as if swept on the wind, the ancients believed that they were, in fact, carried on the wind. As it turns out, they were not that mistaken. Today we know that many infections are airborne. Viruses, housed in the noses and throats of infected persons are sneezed into the air and carried on tiny mucus droplets to be inhaled by the nearest unsuspecting victim. Once in the nasal air passages they gain quick access to the lungs where they can multiply at a startling pace. The newly infected person can then begin shedding his or her own droplets within 24 hours after exposure and the epidemic is off and running.

The influenza virus is one of the most easily communicable infections to spread anywhere there are crowds of people, such as in schools, all places of business and commerce, public places of transportation, including buses, airports and airplanes. Although the virus is somewhat diffused in open air, and sunlight destroys it, in our modern closed buildings where fresh air is blocked out, these infectious viral droplets can circulate on the air currents throughout an entire building in a matter of minutes, be it at a school, a theater, or an office building.

Influenza takes its place among the great plagues of history Cholera, Smallpox, Typhus and Leprosy. These diseases have caused extreme fear and trepidation as well as unmerciful loss of life. The three most deadly scourges of infectious diseases in all of recorded history were The Plague of Justinian, which occurred in the year 542 AD and was said to have taken the lives of 100 million people, The Black Death or Bubonic Plague of the fourteenth century which claimed over 62 million lives, and The Spanish Influenza of 1918-1919.

While little is known of the details surrounding the great Plague of Justinian outside of the colossal loss of life, between the years 1347 to 1351 the Bubonic Plague wiped out about a third of the population of Europe. This infectious disease, caused by a bacillus

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now known as *Yersinia pestis*, or *Pasteurella pestis*, is named after the famous bacteriologist Louis Pasteur. It is a bacteria found in fleas that live on rodents, and was carried by Asian ships sailing to Europe. But in the fourteenth century the cause and the prevention of this mysterious plague was unknown. Therefore, it stalked all of Europe with such ghastly terror that even to this modern day, over 650 years later, the very mention of “the black plague” conjures up the most dreadful images of helplessness in the face of an unknown death stalker. The terms “bubonic” and

“black” plague come from the fact the the disease caused severe swelling of the lymph nodes or buboes, thereby causing its victims to turn black. When this dreaded disease involves the lungs, it is known as pneumonic plague, which can easily be transmitted from person to person by infected mucus droplets. The last great epidemic of the black plague occurred in India in the early 1900’s.

Another historically significant epidemic which ravaged great populations was smallpox, not only among the European countries, but tragically this epidemic was also brought to the Aztec and Inca people of the New World by the Spanish Conquistadors. Other deadly epidemics brought from the outside world include the measles virus carried to the Eskimos and the natives of the Pacific Islands.

The etiology of influenza epidemics has, throughout time, been just as mysterious as its sister plagues. Yet, due to its distinctive symptoms it has been possible to trace its march through history. Hippocrates described symptoms of influenza as early as 412 BC, and historical records indicate that the entire army troops of Charlemagne once fell victim to influenza. The earliest recorded influenza epidemic in Europe occurred from 1170 to 1173. It is thought that these very early epidemics originated in Russia during the winter months and from there spread throughout Europe. Influenza epidemics have occurred with periodic regularity throughout the history of the Renaissance, the period of the Reformation, and all through the early colonization of the Americas.

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ANCIENT BELIEFS

Many modern medical terms stem from archaic concepts. As an example, malaria literally means 'bad air.' The ancient Galenic physicians believed that disease itself, regardless of what form it took, was the result of an internal derangement of one of the four "humors" that were thought to circulate through the body. It was believed that epidemics occurred when invisible emanations from the bowels of the earth somehow polluted the atmosphere.

The flu, which was noted for its sudden onset, muscle aches, fever, cough and severe prostration, was called by many epithets, e.g. the jolly rout, the jolly rant, the new delight, the new

aquaintance, petite poste, and the gentle correction. The old English terms were the "sweating sickness" and "knock-me-down fever," while the French called it the grippe, a term which still persists today. The early medical term for the disease was "catarrhal fever." It wasn't until around the 1770's that it began to be referred to throughout the world as "influenza." John Huxham introduced the term into professional English medical practice in his *Essay on Fevers* in 1750, as a result of the belief that it was an illness "influenced" by the cold which came with the winter season. Others believed that the scourge was a direct 'influence' of the stars, the sun or from somewhere in the heavens. By the year 1782 the term influenza had become the accepted medical reference for the illness. This was to prove very useful in the world's medical community because it would, from that time on, allow doctors to agree on a common disease for the same symptoms they were observing in their patients.

Following the American Revolutionary War, Noah Webster estimated that there had occurred at least forty-four instances since the year 1174 of what he referred to as an "epidemic and pestilential disease" which resembled influenza. Webster, along with his contemporaries in the field of medicine, concluded that the "causes most probably existed in the elements fire, air and water, for we know of no other medium by which disease can be communicated to whole communities of people" and therefore the cause of influenza must be "evidently the effect of some insensible qualities of that atmosphere."

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A historical account of an influenza epidemic in 1562 Scotland indicates how little the symptoms of the disease have changed over time. In November 1562, Lord Randolph from the court of Mary, Queen of Scots, sent the following letter to Lord Cecil:

“Maye it please your Honor, immediately upon the Queene’s arrival here, she fell acquainted with a newe disease that is common in this towne, called here ‘the newe acquayntance,’ which passed also throughe the whole courte, neither sparing lordes, ladyes, nor damoyssells, not so much as either Frenche or English. It is a plague in their heads that have yet, and a soreness in their stomackes, with a great coughe, that remayneth with some longer, with others shorter tyme as yet findeth apte bodies for the nature of the disease. The Queen kept her bed six days. There was no appearance of danger nor manie that die of the disease except some olde folkes. My lord of Murraye is now presently in it, the lord of Lidlington hathe had it, and I am ashamed to say that I have byne free of it, seinge it seketh acquayntance at all men’s hands.”

As we trace the path of influenza through history, it seems that it is always present somewhere in the world population at any given time. Even though some occurrences have proved to be epidemic and more severe in nature, it appears that the majority of time it may affect only a few people with a mild 3-or-4 day episode. The world has lived so long with its comings and goings that it is almost considered a normal part of living to expect a yearly visit of the flu. For that reason, we have come to view influenza as simply an annoying inevitable yearly occurrence which is going to cause us to use up our sick days at work or school or otherwise cause us a few days of miserable inconvenience.

It is also expected that the flu, each time it appears, will claim lives, mostly among the very young and the very old. This was true even as far back as 1750, as an English doctor observed:

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“Towards the end of April, a kind of fever, in general slight, but sometimes, not a little fatal to old men and children who had weak lungs, raged throughout all this country - this fever, although exceedingly common far and near, was fatal to few since, provided that the sick kept within doors in season when they were seized with it, it generally went off on the third or fourth day . . . this fever seemed to have been the same with which, in the Spring was ripe all over Europe, termed the ‘Influenza.’”

There have been only two noteworthy exceptions in the recorded history of influenza epidemics as to the expected age group fatalities which have occurred from the disease. In these two epidemics - the 1781-1782 epidemic and the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918-1919 - the highest mortality rate was among the young adult age group.

THE NATURE OF INFLUENZA

According to the Encyclopedia Americana, “There are two distinct but similar types of viruses that cause influenza; both are members of a group of viruses known as the myxoviruses. This group also includes the viruses that cause mumps and measles.”

One unfortunate factor which contributes to the common complacent view of this infection is the fact that the term flu is applied to almost any malady which causes symptoms resembling

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the common cold. Even gastric upsets are often called “stomach flu,” although this illness has nothing to do with the virus which causes influenza. Influenza is strictly a respiratory disease. We have been lulled into a feeling of false security where this disease is concerned by telling ourselves that as the flu season approaches all we need do is make sure that we get our yearly flu shot. This precaution, we are told, is especially important for the elderly and anyone with a weak immune system. It is often implied that these two groups, as well as the very young, are the only groups who should really be afraid of the flu. Little do many realize that influenza, as a contagious disease, ranks among the greatest plagues known to mankind.

THE SYMPTOMS OF INFLUENZA

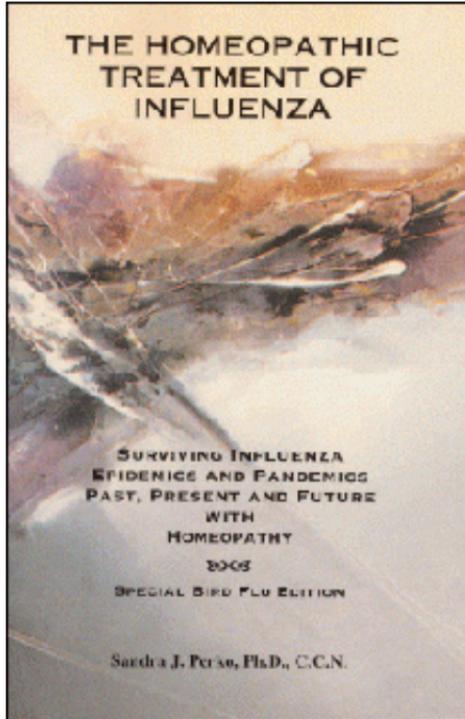
Incubation period: Normally two days; may be as short as only one day or as long as seven days.

Onset of symptoms: Generally sudden, but atypical cases are more gradual.

First symptoms: Headache; general feeling of weakness and sense of “coming down with something;” feverishness or chilliness.

Progressive symptoms: Usually, within a matter of hours, the temperature spikes (101° F and higher); short dry cough - aching of the muscles, especially the back and extremities; in some cases, aching of the joints; often pain in the eyes as well as nasal congestion and discharge; and sore throat. More rarely, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

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