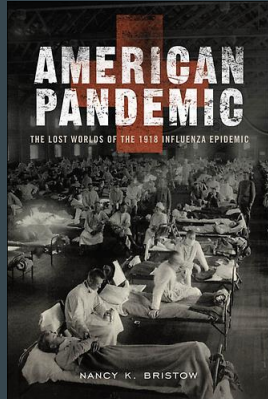
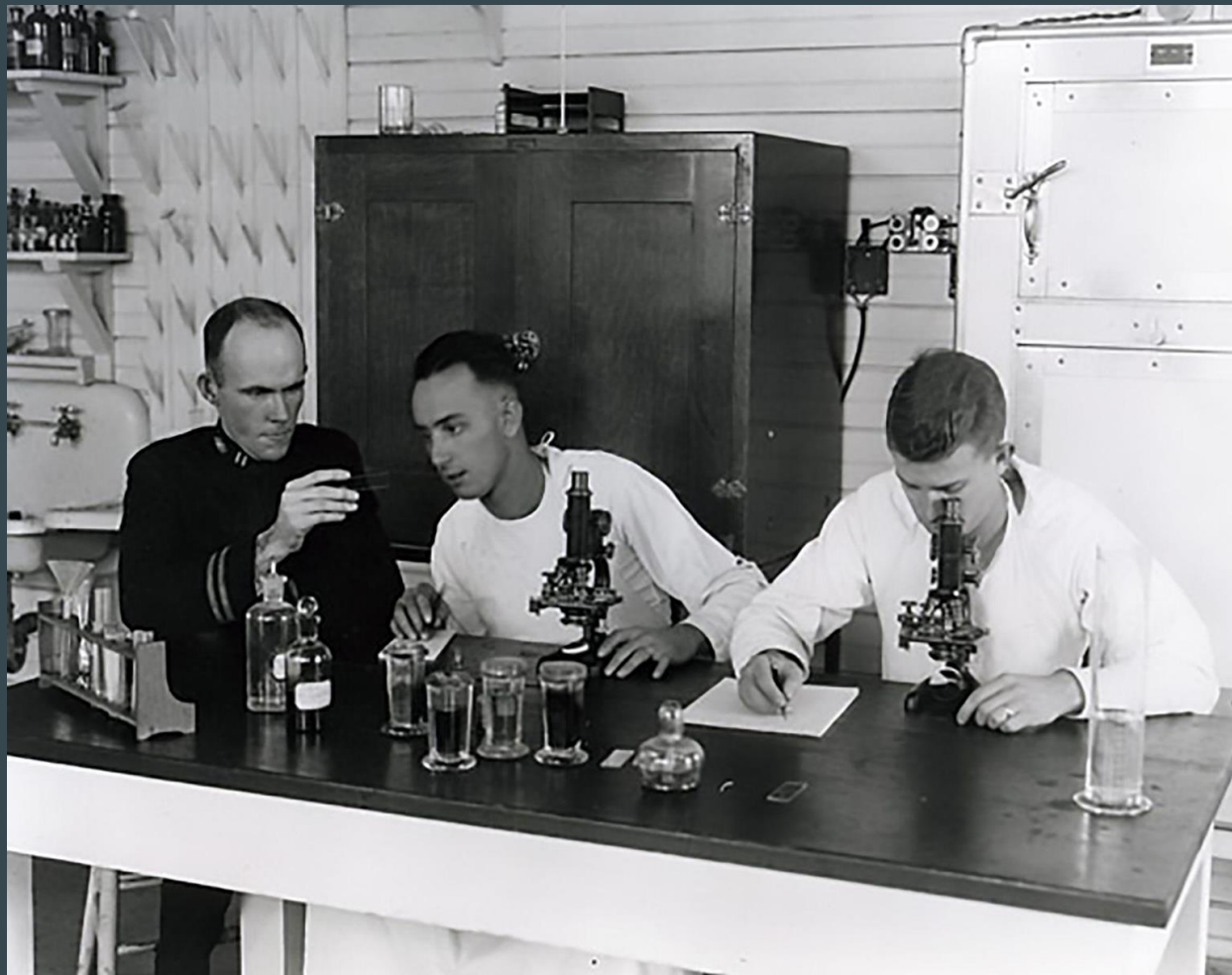


# Influenza 1918: Public Health Policy and the Citizenry

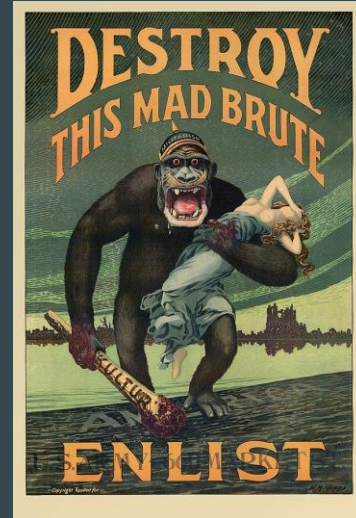


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Distinguished Professor of History  
University of Puget Sound

Prepared for the PACCARB  
March 2, 2022



The bacteriological revolution led to heightened confidence in science, medicine, and public health as preventative vaccines for several diseases emerged from research.



Both the Progressive era and World War One familiarized Americans with greater government intervention in their lives.





Even experienced practitioners were often shocked by the symptoms their patients presented.

Tending to a military patient,  
US Army Hospital #4,  
Ft. Porter, New York  
*National Archives and Records  
Administration (NARA)*



# Influenza Pandemic of 1918-1920

## Global:

1/3 of human beings infected

50-100 million deaths

## United States:

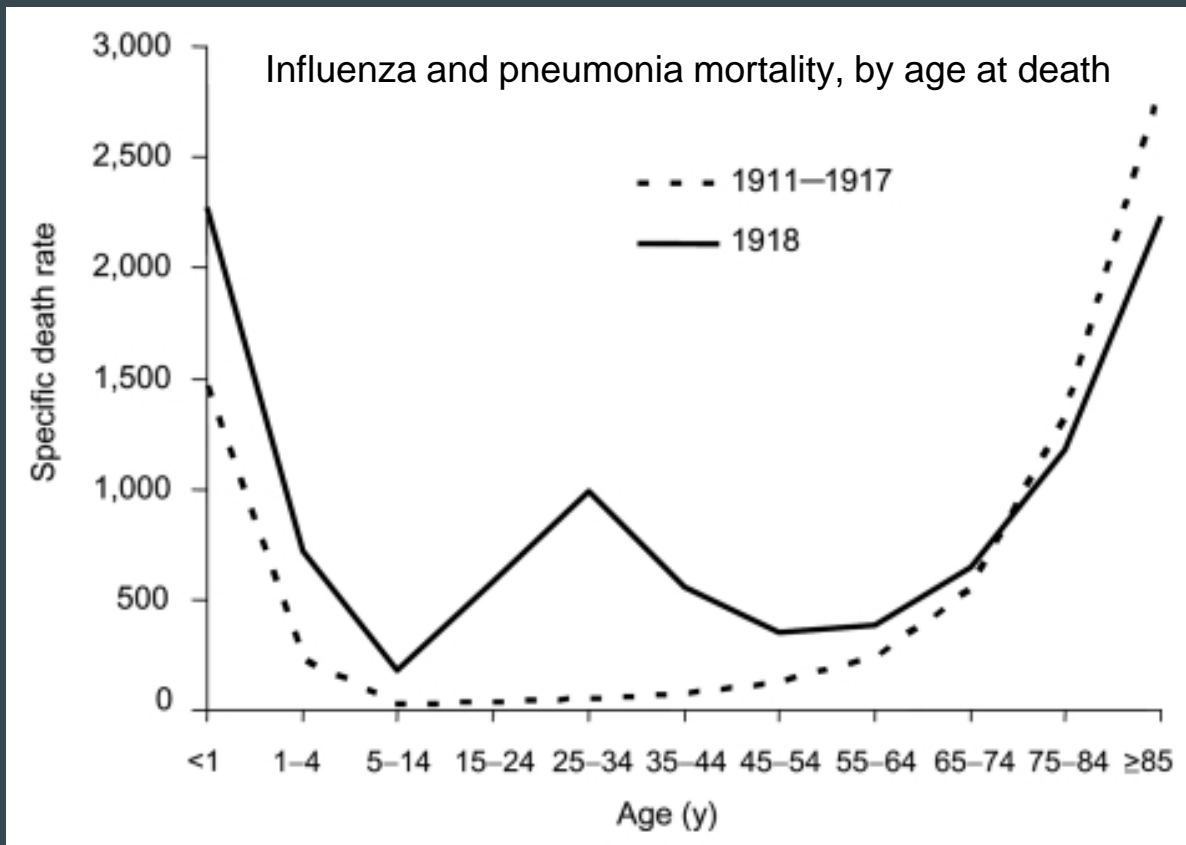
Infection Rate: 25-40%, average 28% (25 million)

Mortality Rates:

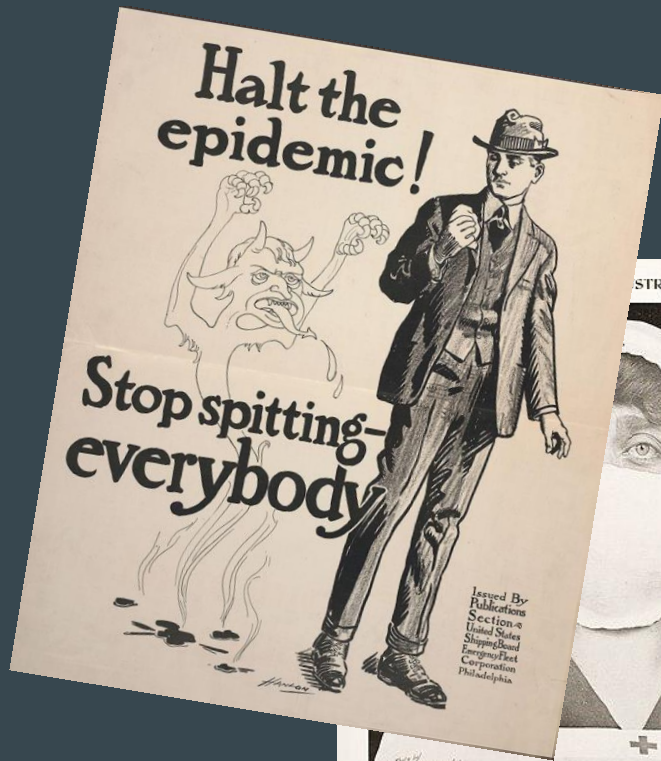
\*Seasonal influenza: .1%

\*Pandemic 1918: 2-2.5% (675,000 American deaths)





“Figure 2. ‘U’ and ‘W’ shaped combined influenza and pneumonia mortality, by age at death, per 100,000 persons in each age group, United States, 1911–1918,” Jeffrey Taubenberger and David M. Morens, “1918 Influenza: The Mother of All Pandemics,” *Emerging Infectious Disease* 12(January 2006): 19.”



STRATED CURRENT NEWS



## To Prevent Influenza

- Do not take any person into your home.
- Keep the mouth and nose of those who visit you covered.
- Avoid those that cough and sneeze.
- Don't visit poorly ventilated places.
- Keep warm, get fresh air and sunshine.
- Don't use common drinking cups, towels, etc.
- Cover your mouth when you cough and sneeze.
- Avoid Worry, Fear and Fatigue.
- Stay at home if you have a cold.
- Walk to your work or office.
- In sick rooms wear a gauze mask like in illustration.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT  
UNITED STATES PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

# INFLUENZA

Spread by Droplets sprayed from Nose and Throat

Cover each **COUGH** and **SNEEZE** with handkerchief.

Spread by contact.

**AVOID CROWDS.**

If possible, **WALK TO WORK.**

Do not spit on floor or sidewalk.

Do not use common drinking cups and towels.

Avoid excessive fatigue.

If taken ill, go to bed and send for doctor.

The above applies also to colds, pneumonia, and tuberculosis.

WEEKLY BULLETIN  
OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
CITY OF NEW YORK

Public health is paramount. Within school institutions a community may determine its own death rate.

Published weekly by the Department of Health, City of New York, 125 Centre Street, New York, N. Y. Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 15, 1917, at the Postoffice at New York, N. Y., Under Act of March 3, 1879. Subscription: 10 cents per annum.

NEW SERIES VOL. VII OCTOBER 10, 1918 No. 42

## "SPANISH INFLUENZA"—"THE FLU"—"THREE-DAY FEVER."

The disease now spreading over this city is highly catching and may invade your home and attack you and your family unless you are very careful.

INFLUENZA is a crowd disease. Therefore: Keep out of crowds as much as possible.

INFLUENZA spreads mostly by inhaling some of the tiny droplets of germ-laden mucus sprayed into the air when careless persons sneeze or cough without using a handkerchief. Therefore: Cover up each cough and sneeze.

INFLUENZA is probably spread by the flu-like cough without using sidewalk, street cars, and other public places. Therefore: Habit of spitting.

INFLUENZA is probably spread by the flu-like cough without using sidewalk, street cars, and other public places. Therefore: Habit of spitting.



Educational efforts were engaged by agencies and organizations ranging from the Red Cross and the Treasury Department to the USPHS and the American Public Health Association.

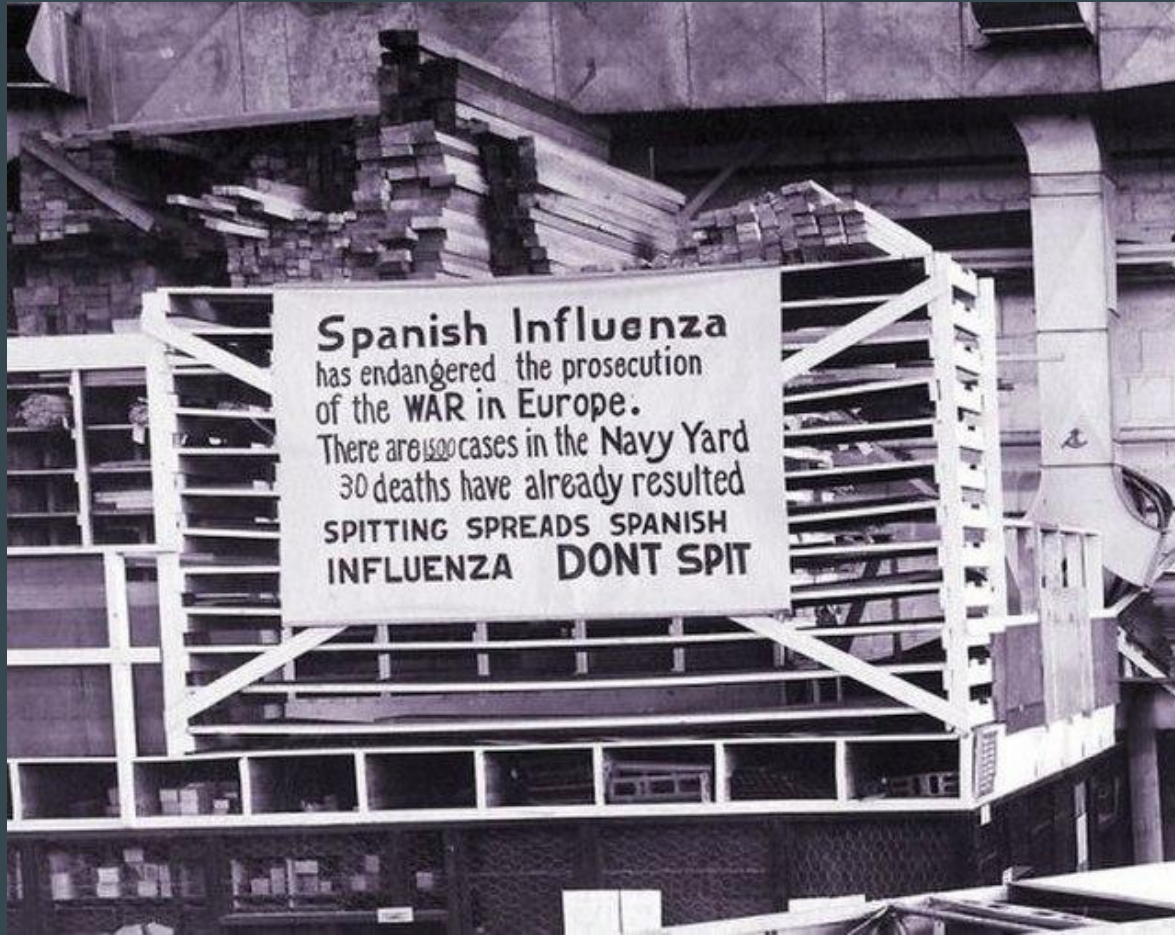


Outdoor church service - San Francisco  
*Photography Collection - California Historical Society*

Non-pharmaceutical interventions employed in 1918 were similar to those we have used during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- \* closures
- \* prohibition of public gatherings
- \* quarantining
- \* masking





Authorities often framed public health measures as part of the war effort to encourage patriotic compliance.

Sign in a naval yard, 1918



Church, school, and business leaders often pushed against closure orders and urged their rapid lifting.

Seattle movie theatre closed due to the pandemic.

*University of Washington*



A Seattle man being refused entry to a streetcar for failure to wear a mask.

NARA

**ANTI-MASK  
MEETING**  
**TONIGHT (Saturday) JAN. 25**  
**DREAMLAND RINK**  
To Protest Against the Unhealthy Mask Ordinance

In San Francisco, an Anti-Mask League formed in January 1919 during a renewed wave of influenza and new mandates.

# Thinking about a Future Pandemic

- \*Honesty, transparency, and well-considered messaging must be a priority.
- \*Preparedness must include governmental and public health leadership and the citizenry.
- \*Extensive, boundary-crossing coordination must be cultivated.
- \*De-politicization of public health would serve the nation's health.
- \*Equity issues must be attended to prior to a pandemic circumstance.