

## The 100 years of Influenza Pandemic

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**Received:** January 18, 2018; **Published:** February 21, 2018

The year 1918, in addition events of First World War, was marked by another war at the microscopic level. This year began one of the greatest pandemics of the twentieth century. Triggered by the H1N1 virus, the Spanish flu, as it became known, killed more than the entire First World War. Around the world was decimated by disease. In Spain, about 8 million were infected, among them, King Alfonso XIII. In some places, there was a lack of space to bury the dead, and many were buried in mass graves and the wakes lasted minutes. A doctor's report describes that the illness begins with a simple flu, but that it rapidly evolved into a type of devastating pneumonia and that, within a few hours, could lead to death. Many of those affected were children between 12 and 24 months and adult individuals who were between 20 and 40 years of age. Several hypotheses were raised about this specificity of the virus would be related to recent mutations in the virus and that between 1880 and 1900, the virus circulating was very different from the cause of the pandemic (H3N8). Thus, individuals born at that time would not have been exposed to H1 or N1 antigens. The fact that it affects young children would be related to the mortality of mothers who were unable to breastfeed children and to develop immunity from breast milk. What intrigued the scientific and medical community was how a "simple flu" could turn out to be a worldwide pandemic? If we remember the 2009 swine flu pandemic, we can remember that the easy mutation of the virus and the large crowding of people facilitate its transmission. Although in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we have modern vaccines and antiretroviral devices, such as oseltamivir phosphate (Tamiflu®) and chalcones with high antiretroviral activity, simple attitudes are still primordial. Washing your hands with soap and water, avoid touching your mouth and nose, and maintaining healthy habits can help fight the transmission of the flu. Prevention is still the best medicine.

**Volume 14 Issue 3 March 2018**

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