San Francisco, Jan. 5, 1919

Ralph:

Dear Mr. Mayor,

You cannot but be deeply interested in the pathology of the so-called "Spanish Influenza." It is not influenza in any sense. To be mild it must be of a catarhal nature from the beginning. The epidemic of "La Grippe" that we went through some 2 years ago was of such a nature. But in the present epidemic there is no such catarhal premonitory, unless that usually experienced as an ordinary cold, but it is not a characteristic of the disease.

This so-called "Spanish Influenza" is an epidemic pneumonic of a chronic or malignant type, because the pneumonic stage has a paralytic effect on the motor nerves of the heart.

This is demonstrated by clinical observation and is the one differential characteristic from the ordinary lobar pneumonic.

Its predilection to heart failure is also the cause of some victims of the disease turning dark or black after death, as they do from arrow-poison and other powerful cardiac relatives.

My clinical observations teach me that the present epidemic pneumonic may be mild or without heart failure, or what is usually alleged, the pneumonic may be absent and yet the heart failure continue to greatly threaten life, and with a temperature of 105° where there is no lung ice or pneumonic pleurisy.

This is a copy from the original manuscript held in the California Historical Society Library, San Francisco. It may be used for reference only, and no permission is here
The medical profession has gone mad on fresh air and ventilation in the sick rooms; in utter disregard of the nature of the gases needed for treatment.

Because fresh air and plenty of it has been curative in consumption, the profession has jumped to the insane conclusion that it must also be beneficial in pneumonia, when as a matter of fact, cold air and drafts are fatal to pneumonia. This is the reason why so many die needlessly. At a temperature of 70 degrees, where pneumonia patients are treated should not be below 70%. Cold air for the inflamed lung is as injurious as bright light for an inflamed eye.

Since the Christmas Eve celebration there is a notable increase of the number of cases of epidemic pneumonia, because thousands are both in the cold and in the damp and put grounds where they become chilled, catch an ordinary cold, then they become fertile soil for the pneumonia germs.

I write you this at length with the hope of driving your mind of the futility of wearing masks. There is no prevention against this epidemic, except to avoid taking care of having one remaining in doors until it has subsided.

If these words shall contribute to effect your disenchantment of passing another winter in bed. I still have been paid for my time and thought in writing this letter.

Yours respectfully,

John McCullin, M.D.