

Papers of Mayor James Rolph

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San Francisco, Jan. 5. 1919

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Mr. James Ralph.

Dear Mr. Mayo:

You cannot but be deeply interested in the pathology of the so-called "Spanish Influenza". It is not influenza in any sense. To be such it must be of a catarrhal nature from the beginning.

The epidemic of La Grippe that we went through some 22 years ago was of such a nature. But in the present epidemic there is no such catarrhal 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 pneumonia of a severe or malignant type, because the pneumonic toxine has a paralytic effect on the motor nerves of the heart.

This is demonstrated by clinical observation and is the one differentiated characteristic from the ordinary lobar pneumonia.

Its predisposition 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 observation teaches me that the present epidemic pneumonia may be with or without heart failure, or what is unusually strange, the pneumonia may be absent and yet the heart failure continue to greatly threaten life, and with a temperature of 105° where there is no lung inflammation whatever.

The medical profession has gone mad on fresh air and ventilation in the sick room; in utter disregard of the nature of the cases under 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 need. A temperature of a room 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 Examiner, Christmas tree celebration there is a notable increase of the number of cases of epidemic pneumonia, because thousands stand there in the cold and on the damp and wet ground where they became chilled, caught an ordinary cold, then they became fertile soil for the pneumonia germs.

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

If these lines should contribute to elicit your ^{to wear masks} disappearance of passing another ordinance, I will have been paid for my time and thought in writing this letter.

Yours respectfully

John W. Miller, M.D.