

# Good essay on the outbreak of influenza in boston and philadelphia

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## **Abstract**

During the first World War, influenza virus created havoc into the lives of people in the United States specifically in Philadelphia, Boston, and Kansas. There were several accounts about the origin of the disease however none of them can truly prove that the disease originated from their place. The only known fact is that the influenza virus caused the deaths of many people that everyone became terrified to go out in the streets and go to work or attend schools. The influenza virus was several times intense compared to the AIDS virus and the Black Death. The year 1918 signified the collision of the epidemic disease and science. Overbearing in its extensiveness of viewpoint and complexity of study and now reviewed to imitate the developing risk of the avian virus, The Great Influenza is eventually a story of achievement amongst tragedy, which offers a detailed and sobering exemplary as the human race defies the epidemics impending on their own perspective. This paper discusses the outbreak of the influenza in both Boston and Philadelphia and the different responses by each city.

It was in 1918 when the influenza virus first emerged in the United States that eventually spread across the globe (Barry 12). The earliest appearances of influenza in deadly form happened in Philadelphia. Such pandemic took the lives of many people than most other disease outbreaks that transpired in the history of humans. On August 28, influenza became widespread and in a matter of one week, the cases of affected individuals increased particularly among sailors. The disease continued to run its course shipyards and nearby naval installations. By the middle part of September, influenza had caused

inflection to over two thousand sailors in Boston. With several cases of influenza, medical officers had a hard time procuring enough healthcare facilities. Military officials made sure to stem the increasing cases and to offer protection to the other military personnel and sailors in Boston including the civilians. The sailors were relocated to barracks in Framingham as a way of saving them from harm. Cases of influenza among civilians in Boston appeared. Because of the rapid spread of influenza among the civilians, local health specialist assumed that the disease would burn out without the needed interventions.

The great influenza lasted for two years from 1918 and 1920. The virus caused the deaths of millions. In the United States, over six hundred thousand people died because of influenza. However, the 1918 pandemic was beyond usual in that about 50% of the casualties were young individuals mostly in their 20s and early 30s. The influenza virus was capable of unchecked virulence, malice, and brutality. It caused havoc to the body of the victims, especially the lungs. A lot of those stricken by the disease had bleeding and an uncontrollable cough. Blood was seen coming out from the nose and in several other cases from the ears and mouth due to coughing. The body ached up to the point that the bones were breaking. The patients' skin changed colour from blue to violent and even black. An army recognized that the patients had haemorrhagic lungs which became dangerous in a matter of a day or two. Another rare aspect of the influenza was the fact that the virus affected the victims in an abrupt manner. A lot of people recalled the day that they first became sick. Across the world, people suddenly collapsed or dropped from the horses. The gestation time of influenza was a

day to three days. The virus infects the body cells in 24 hours and soon reproduce to millions and discharges its progeny. This implied that after the replication of the virus, it restrained its victims in an uncompromising and dramatic fashion. Death came quickly and the person could look just fine at one instance and suddenly collapses and dies.

In Philadelphia, the priests went from one house to another and called upon people to open their houses and bring out the bodies of their loved ones. The same thing was happening in other parts of the United States and the world. Experts believed that the influenza virus started in Kansas, United States. The virus was then brought to an army base nearby and from there, it spread to Europe and then to France. When it extended to the army base in France and in Spain, the influenza virus mutated and turned into a milder form of virus. The terrifying nature of the virus spread out in Philadelphia and many people died. In some cases, the entire families got sick and infected. Many children became orphan and the Bureau of Child Hygiene found it difficult to care for all of them. As the diseases continued to spread, businesses and schools emptied. Telephone and telegraph services collapsed as operators did not go to work. Garbage remained uncollected and the mails were not delivered as carriers did not attend to work as well. Because of the many deaths in the area, people started to steal caskets. Soon enough, there were no more caskets left to take.

There were accounts that claims influenza virus to have originated not just in some parts of the United States but also in Boston. The affected sailors were brought the Chelsea Naval Hospital and from there, the disease continued to become widespread in the entire city and the all the rest of the Boston state.

During the second week of September, influenza affected Camp Devens and killed several men. In the late part of September, a specialist at Camp Devens offered an unsettling description of the event. According to the physician, the influenza virus demoralized the people and halted the work of every individual. The men had a viscous form of pneumonia and two hours later, Mahogany spots appear on the cheek bones. Cyanosis starts to extend from the patients' ears to the face until it becomes difficult to recognize the black men from the white. Hours more, death comes because of difficulty in breathing. There was an average of 100 deaths each day. There were no coffins for the dead and the bodies soon began to pile up. The dead bodies were laid out in rows. Another extra barracks were vacated to serve as Morgue. On September 26, the state officer asked for assistance from the Surgeon General as the virus continued to spread quickly in Boston state. It was Boston that was initially struck by the virus and suffered the greatest loss. On the 27th of September, Massachusetts reported that the virus had affected the city. On the 1st of October, the officials reported 75, 000 cases of influenza. The PHS remained optimistic about the events in Massachusetts stating that the influenza virus had declined since the first part of October. In Boston, state officials assumed that the condition of the virus had started to diminish in strength. The death rate started to drop.

The pandemic's effect in Framingham manifested in two apparent waves and culminated as evident in the rate of mortality from October 1918 to December 1918. Despite the decline in the rates of influenza, the disease continued to become prevalent. In 1919, the virus had started to disappear from Boston. The immediate response of people in Boston and Philadelphia

was to save themselves from the outbreak of influenza virus. Seeing the danger of the virus, several quarantines were implemented to avert the spread of the virus. Theatres, schools. Pool halls, saloons, and churches were closed. Even businesses such as telecommunications and mail delivery shut down. The bodies mounted and the funerals were held outside to provide protection to the mourners against the danger that the influenza virus brings. Those who were not aware that influenza was viral in nature and that masks did not provide real protection, public officials demanded the people to put on gauze masks. Advertisements that recommended drugs for treatment of influenza emerged in many newspapers and printed materials.

## **Reference**

Barry, J. (2009). The epic story of the deadliest plague in history (1st ed.). London: Penguin Books Ltd.