

"FLU" WORK IN NEW MEXICO

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As per the JOURNAL'S request, a bit of government work and personal experience in influenza among "Our Brothers in Brown," and other folk in New Mexico, may be not uninteresting.

Called by wire to the Public Health Service I was assigned to Torrance County by Major Kerr, at East Los Vegas, and was ordered to proceed to Mountainair and vicinity, where the pandemic raged with violence and where the death rate was appalling, with instructions to do whatever might be deemed wise after personal investigation.

Not knowing what might be exactly the best means of stamping out the disease, after consultation with the County Health Officer and the local profession, it was decided to put into immediate effect all probable helpful measures, these covering isolation, quarantine, personal and house fumigation and universal masking.

All sick visiting was interdicted. Every patient was as completely isolated as circumstances would permit. No member of a family having influenza was allowed to mingle with the public. There was no going back and forth from a sick home to a place of business. The town council was induced to pass a fine-ordinance and this was enforced. Special health policemen were appointed to see that effective quarantine was maintained, and they were looked after to see that they did it.

Informing leaflets were printed, in both English and Spanish, and freely distributed. Hearty co-operation was invited, but penalties were also announced. Wherever in our long drives over the large county we found even small gatherings of people these were addressed, the gravity of the situation was explained, rules and regulations were set forth and future gatherings were forbidden. All schools had previously been closed, although personally I would have preferred otherwise, with general masking and supervision by competent teachers and visiting health officials. During epidemics I do not favor having young children run at large.

Every recovering patient was formaldehyded before being allowed to mix with other folks, every sick room was tightly

sealed and fumigated, then aired for twenty-four hours, before being used again. Placards not only announced "Influenza" but bore words of warning to keep away, also announcing a fine for trespass, these proving very efficacious.

Just which of our measures proved most successful it is difficult to say, but under similar conditions I should not like to get along without either isolation, quarantine or the mask. In the latter I have come to have a great deal of confidence, and am not strongly impressed with the thought that its general use is likely to create a panicky state.

Especially interesting was the situation among the Mexican population. At Manzana, the word meaning "Apple," a small town three hundred and fifty years old, and the proud possessor of the oldest apple orchard in America, from which both town and mountain range got their name, there had been from seventy-five to two hundred cases a day. Entire families had been wiped out. In one little cemetery I counted fourteen new graves, in another of diminutive dimensions there were twenty-four. On the brow of the hill close at hand there is still to be seen a cross and altar before and on which the Mexican "Penitentes" had practiced scourging themselves over at least three centuries of time—burning, carving and otherwise mangling themselves and their aged and their children for their sins, both imaginary and real. Ignorance is the besetting sin, nowadays as in the past, of these brown-skinned Aztecs. Huddled crowds were to be seen everywhere on the street corners and in the stores. Incantations and unlimited sick-room visiting had always been their habit. These humble people had been burying their dead stoically, without a murmur or a tear, Indian-like and with a degree of resignation that with the whites is styled "Christian"; but they were ready to grasp at friendly advice and to follow instructions.

At one little cemetery I spoke to a group of them in their native tongue, explaining our mission, advising them what to do and more particularly what not to do, they on the inside of the cemetery wall, I on the running board in the village street, and their "Muchas Gracias, Senor Medico!" as I finished were most touching. Not one bit of difficulty did we have in securing the heartiest co-operation and obedience of these people, whereas many of our American citizens were at first disposed to be obstreperous and all-wise until we "put the law on" a few of them. When it comes to things preventive

and things medical the Mexican doesn't know and he knows it, whereas it often happens, in similar circumstances, that the American doesn't know but thinks he does—a distinction with also a difference.

Medically, the old school were at sea as their official *Journal* shows them to be elsewhere. I had just attended at Denver a meeting of three hundred physicians, called together by the State Board of Health to discuss the "flu," and there was not an affirmative suggestion of value. Negatively, I could easily have imagined myself at a truly Homeopathic gathering, so severe were the condemnations of the coal-tar products, but of helpful suggestion there was not a word.

Likewise in New Mexico; but I found men willing to listen and learn, and before my service was ended veratrum viride in high temperature and much lung involvement, gelsemium in muscular debility and basal headache, arnica where bruised feeling predominated, bryonia for hard dry cough, with occasional pleural complication, causticum for smarting throat and teasing, tickling, persistent cough as if from a thread, bit of sawdust or other foreign particle, were being used with satisfaction and success.

Likewise ipecac and tartar emetic, where there seemed to be necessity for expectoration; in severe lung engorgement without expectoration these two agents soon brought up the stuff and the relief was marked. All remedies were given in moderate potency, veratrum and gelsemium almost in the crude, in regular pharmacy prescription style by the old school doctors brought to use them. Nothing cut down the temperature so well as veratrum, nothing relieved the cough as did bryonia, with ipecac to loosen things up. I treated very few cases personally, but saw many severe ones in consultation, none of which died.

My work was that of Acting Assistant Surgeon of the United States Public Health Service,—to advise and prevent rather than to treat patients except as local doctors might be overburdened. But I saw enough of their treatment before and after they adopted part of ours, and they saw it too, and freely acknowledged it, to know that when it comes to severe diseases of any kind the homeopathic "zapatero" has little to gain by not sticking to his last.

In results, the measures which were instituted met every requirement. Within five days there was a marked decrease

in new cases and deaths, in eight days both had dropped almost to zero, and on the twelfth day the epidemic was accounted checked. It was my lot to drive above a thousand miles over country roads with the county health officer, to visit and institute our measures in fourteen towns, and to check up the records of above three thousand cases, an experience very like in many particulars some of my earlier professional experience in malignant yellow fever in the south, when we quarantined with shotguns if necessary.

INFLUENZA AMONG THE INSANE

By Mary I. Senseman, M. D., Elgin, Ill.

"If the two and a half million people living in Chicago were to count, day and night, without stopping to eat or sleep or die, for twenty thousand years, then if the amount all had counted would be added together, the total would be the number of electrons passing through an ordinary light filament in one second."—Prof. Milikan, University of Chicago.

"A new object had been photographed by the camera lens in the telescope. At last I realized that it was another universe—a million light years away!"—Prof. Baumgart, Lick Observatory.

Insanity is one variety of abnormal reaction to normal phenomena. As a common form of that abnormal reaction is the inability to speak rationally, the study and interpretation of symptoms presenting, both physical and mental, must be done by observation.

In the recent epidemic of influenza at one of our state institutions for the insane the overflow hospital cases were under my care. There were only forty-nine who were sick enough to be in bed.

The first sixteen of those were placed in one dormitory, and, when I visited them, I found the temperatures ranging from ninety-nine degrees to one hundred four and six-tenths. All were silent, motionless, dusky-faced. They did not moan or complain or ask for anything. They turned from side to side when asked to do so during the examination. Every few minutes one would cough—that short, hard, shallow cough with the peculiar sound of air being expelled quickly through constricted tubes.

Bryonia was the only remedy that presented itself to my mind at that time, and I gave it in the ten thousandth potency.

The number of cases rapidly increased. Among them there