

History of Pandemics – Pre-Twentieth Century

Chronology:

400 B.C.:

Hippocrates records an outbreak of a cough, followed by pneumonia and other symptoms, at Perinthus in northern Greece (now part of Turkey). Several possible identifications have been suggested, including influenza, whooping cough and diphtheria.

212 B.C.:

The historian Livy describes an infectious disease, perhaps influenza, which strikes the Roman army.

161 – 180 A.D.:

Antoine Plague claims the lives of to as many as a third of parts of the Roman Empire population, decimates the Roman Army and takes the life of Marcus Aurelius in 180 A.D.

256 A.D.:

During the **Alexandrian Plague**, most people flee, but Christians stay behind to care for the sick and dying. As a result, many pay the cost for their compassion with their own lives.

6th Century:

John of Ephesus shares of personal suffering and family losses from a pandemic, writing that people feared leaving their homes, carried identification on leaving home in the event they fell ill and died in the streets.

14th Century:

A group of Christians are called "Plague Saints" because of their sacrificial service in helping the sick. One, St. Roch, devotes himself to caring those struck by the plague that was ravaging Italy; he becomes ill himself but recovers.

16th Century:

St. Louis Bertrand is known for providing for the spiritual and physical needs of people struck down by a plague. He nurses the sick when others are too fearful to be near them.

1781 - '82:

Considered among the greatest manifestations of disease in history, this influenza pandemic afflicts two-thirds of the people of Rome and three-quarters of the population of Britain. Influenza also spreads widely in North America, the West Indies and Spanish **America**.

1789:

A widespread epidemic of influenza hits New England, New York and Nova Scotia in the fall. Most deaths appear to come from secondary pneumonia.

1829 - '32, 1836 - '37:

An epidemic begins in Asia late in 1829. From there it spreads to Indonesia by January 1831. The disease also breaks out in Russia in the winter of 1830-'31 and spreads westward. By November it reaches the United States.

1889-'90:

Russian flu - this worldwide influenza epidemic, the most devastating up to that time, begins in Central Asia in the summer of 1889, spreads north into Russia, east to China and west to Europe. It eventually strikes North America, parts of Africa and major Pacific Rim countries. By conservative estimates, 250,000 die in Europe, and the world death total is two to three times that.

(summarized from Church Preparedness Guide by Donald L. Hughes of Theatron Media Group, Inc., www.TheatronFilms.com)