

Flu Files- The Toronto Globe, October 2, 1918

While I was searching through different newspapers to find an article about the Spanish Flu, I came across an article written in the Globe Toronto dated October 2, 1918. The article, *No cases yet in hospitals: Spanish Influenza apparently not making serious inroads in Toronto*, discusses the lack of Spanish Flu cases in Toronto and suggests confidence in being “flu-free”. When COVID-19 was at its peak in China, Americans were confident that our country would be safe from catching and spreading this virus. I think it is ironic that in 1918 and 2020 most people felt confident in their country and were sure the virus would not reach their homes. The article focuses a lot on the other illnesses present in Toronto and the “warm weather” which will kill most if not all illnesses.

In October 1918, the Spanish flu was beginning to spread in Canada. According to the Canadian Encyclopedia, the Spanish flu was brought to Canada when soldiers were returning home after the war (November 1918). This would indicate that, in October 1918, Spanish flu was in the initial stages of spreading across Canada. From my research, I understood there to be two peaks during the Spanish Flu pandemic. The first peak was from November-December 1918, and the second peak was from February-March 1919. As I looked through the entire newspaper, I would say that Toronto was not expecting the Spanish flu to affect Canada and the whole world. There was not much content throughout the newspaper and, many of the articles revolved around other local forms of news.

One interesting fact I would like to point out about this article is the use of the word “la grippe”. From just a simple Google Search, I was able to figure out that la grippe means influenza in French. I also came across an article, *What was ‘La Grippe’*, written in the Odyssey

that mentioned la grippe was another prominent name for the Spanish Flu. This would mean that in October 1918, most people in Canada did not use the word influenza, but rather la grippe. Furthermore, it is interesting to see the different terms used for the Spanish flu during that time period. Today, living in the ongoing pandemic, there are also so many different terms used all around the world for COVID-19. A few noteworthy terms would be corona, COVID, Rona, and even the "Chinese Virus" coined by the president of the United States.

From my observations, I would say October 1918 and January-February 2020 are similar in terms of the stage of the pandemic. During both periods of time, Canada and America were aware of the virus but failed to think it would significantly affect their country and its people. The confidence that is implied in the 1918 article was also present in people and the news in the United States. I know that personally, I did not think COVID-19 would spread to the United States and cause such a mess in the country, but here we are. It is interesting to see how history does repeat itself because the similarities between Canada in October 1918 and the United States in January- February 2020 are uncanny.

Citations:

Lorenz, Andre, et al. "What Was 'La Grippe'?" *The Odyssey Online*, 16 Oct. 2019, www.theodysseyonline.com/what-was-la-grippe.

Dickin, Janice, et al. "1918 Spanish Flu in Canada." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 18 Mar. 2020, thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/1918-spanish-flu-in-canada.

"No Cases Yet in Hospitals: Spanish Influenza Apparently Not Making Serious Inroads in Toronto." *The Toronto Globe*, 2 Oct. 2918, pp. 8–16.

NO CASES YET IN HOSPITALS

Spanish Influenza Apparently Not Making Serious In- roads in Toronto

Beyond two cases of pneumonia and one of la grippe, which are in the Western Hospital, and the admission of a man and a girl to the General Hospital with severe colds which may develop into the much-discussed Spanish influenza, there were no developments in the hospitals yesterday to indicate that the epidemic which has been sweeping the United States and Canada had reached Toronto.

At the General Hospital it was stated that the man was quite sick. Neither the indisposition of the man or the girl had yet been diagnosed as the Spanish influenza. They were isolated from other patients as a precautionary measure.

Warm weather is promised for today, which will assist in destroying a good many of the chest disorders and checking the epidemic of colds which has been so apparent within the past few days.

Dr. Hastings, the Medical Officer of Health, has discovered nothing in the present situation to warrant the closing of schools and places of amusement. He has issued instructions, however, that when children appear to be suffering from colds they are to be sent to their homes. Dr. Hastings suggests walking, rather than crowding into a street car, as a measure which would have the effect of avoiding any epidemic.

Just La Grippe.

Mr. P. C. Larkin, who has recently returned from Boston, does not think that there is any cause for alarm in the local situation. He is Vice-Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Toronto General Hospital. It is his opinion that Toronto is experiencing nothing more than the usual epidemic of la grippe, but of a more malignant form.