

1918 Influenza Epidemic and Chiropractic Care

Editors Note: The information provided here was forwarded to Planet Chiropractic by a chiropractor in Texas. Far too many people (including chiropractors) are not aware of historical events that took place during the 1917 – 1918 Spanish Flu years, which involved chiropractors caring for thousands that suffered influenza infection during those times. With such a firestorm of media coverage and fear surrounding the Swine Flu Pandemic, it would be irresponsible not to attempt seeking knowledge regarding influenza events of the past.

The Official History of Chiropractic in Texas

By Walter R. Rhodes, D.C.

Published by the Texas Chiropractic Association — 1978

“The 1917 – 1918 influenza epidemic swept silently across the world bringing death and fear to homes in every land. Disease and pestilence, especially the epidemics, are little understood even now and many of the factors that spread them are still mysterious shadows, but in 1917-1918 almost nothing was known about prevention, protection, treatment or cure of influenza. The whole world stood at its mercy, or lack of it.”

“In Davenport, Iowa, 50 medical doctors treated 4,953 cases, with 274 deaths. In the same city, 150 chiropractors including students and faculty of the Palmer School of Chiropractic, treated 1,635 cases with only one death.”

“In the state of Iowa, medical doctors treated 93,590 patients, with 6,116 deaths – a loss of one patient out of every 15. In the same state, excluding Davenport, 4,735 patients were treated by chiropractors with a loss of only 6 cases – a loss of one patient out of every 789.”

“National figures show that 1,142 chiropractors treated 46,394 patients for influenza during 1918, with a loss of 54 patients – one out of every 886.”

“Reports show that in New York City, during the influenza epidemic of 1918, out of every 10,000 cases medically treated, 950 died; and in every 10,000 pneumonia cases medically treated 6,400 died. These figures are exact, for in that city these are reportable diseases.”

“In the same epidemic, under drugless methods, only 25 patients died of influenza out of every 10,000 cases; and only 100 patients died of pneumonia out of every 10,000 cases. This comparison is made more striking by the following table:”

Influenza Cases Deaths - Under medical methods - Under drugless methods “In the same epidemic reports show that chiropractors in Oklahoma treated 3,490 cases of influenza with only 7 deaths. But the best part of this is, in Oklahoma there is a clear record showing that chiropractors were called in 233 cases where medical doctors had cared for the patients, and finally gave them up as lost. The chiropractors saved all these lost cases but 25.”