

THE CONTROL OF INFLUENZA IN ONTARIO

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IN Ontario influenza is not required by law to be reported, placarded or quarantined, and does not come under the regulations regarding communicable disease except that, by a recent Order-in-council, land and unoccupied buildings may be taken summarily by a board of health for hospital purposes.

With respect to the closing of schools, churches, theatres and other public assemblages, each Medical Officer of Health or Local Board of Health has power to close such places if it seems desirable. The matter of placarding, and quarantining for this effectation is regarded by the Provincial Board of Health of Ontario as being impracticable. The Board does not think such a law could be satisfactorily enforced for the reason that before the necessary measures (inspection, placarding, etc.) could be taken in respect to the thousands of homes, a great number of the cases would be well and the intolerable situation of keeping comparatively well persons in large numbers tied up would ensue. Under such a regulation many people with colds would be improperly quarantined, and in short the operation of the law would, as it has been in many of the States to the south of us, be a dead letter. While the Local Board has the power to close schools, churches, theatres, etc., during epidemics of this kind, the utility of this measure of prevention is obviously limited when departmental stores, business places, street and railway cars are allowed to carry on business as usual. Where a well-equipped medical inspection of schools is in operation as in Toronto, there seems to be no doubt that the children would be better at school than running the streets and spending their time (as they have in large numbers been doing in Toronto) in the shops where the warmth and attractions are better than many of them have at home.

Before Ontario had any appreciable number of cases the Board distributed to every physician in the province a circular giving the latest information in respect to the disease. This was

succeeded by a circular to Medical Officers of Health pointing out the law and advising precautions to be taken. Finally a second circular was issued to all physicians giving information as to the character of the disease, methods of treatment, etc. The press also was largely used for the dissemination of advice to the public.

Realizing the probable necessity for nursing help throughout the province the Board organized the Ontario Emergency Volunteer Nursing Auxiliary for the training of V.A.D.'s and established a course of lectures in Toronto. Branches were formed in many of the cities and towns, some of which were supplied with lecturers, and the voluntary nurses (called Sisters of Service), were supplied in large numbers to families in need of help. In Toronto the Auxiliary was able to furnish nursing help to some one thousand families. Similar work was done in many other places such as Hamilton, St. Catharines, London, Collingwood, Barrie, etc. The Auxiliary supplied both trained and voluntary nurses to many outside points, and endeavoured, with a large measure of success, to supply medical assistance to communities where the physicians were overworked or where one or more had lost his life in the course of the epidemic.

It is estimated that there were at least 40,000 to 50,000 cases of influenza in Ontario and the number of deaths is approximately 3,500.

Strains of bacteria were procured from Boston and New York and a prophylactic vaccine prepared both by the Connaught Laboratories of the University of Toronto, and the Laboratories of the Provincial Board of Health. This vaccine has been supplied very freely to the public all over Ontario and to some extent throughout Canada. The Board in issuing this vaccine took occasion to point out that while its use rested upon a rational and scientific basis, no results could be promised with certainty. The limited reports received, however, indicate that it has been of some value in prevention of this disease.