

The Influenza Pandemic 1918-19: Current debates; Unanswered questions

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While we have scientific agreement on the revised numbers of deaths caused by the Influenza Pandemic from earlier estimates of 20 million to upwards of 50 million, investigations of almost every other aspect of this pandemic raise many more questions than answers. From its origins, to explanations for its rapid spread and high mortality especially with respect to the unusual high fatality rates in populations of healthy young people, to its place within the historical literature of science and medicine, 'forgotten' until recent years, the Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19 can be seen as an extraordinary event within the context of World War I or the precursor to coming plagues. A review of contemporary evidence and debates forms the foundation of this paper as we look back to the pandemic within the context of World War I and forward to strategies for prevention of future pandemics.