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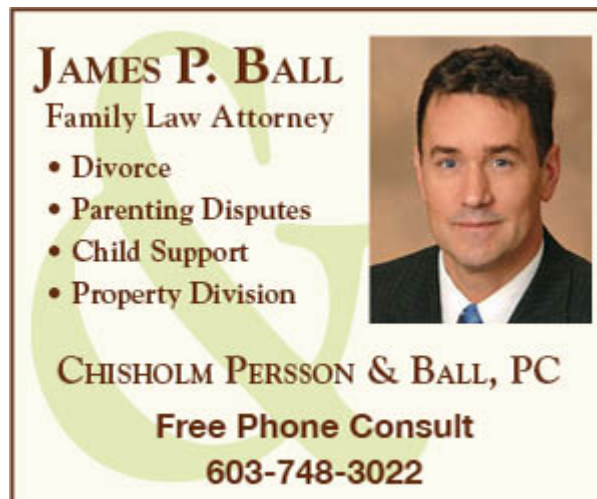
State Board of Health offers guidelines for surviving 1918 influenza pandemic

By WARREN D. HUSE, for The Laconia Daily Sun
Apr 13, 2020

Part 3 of a series.

LACONIA — Early in October 1918, *The Laconia Democrat* carried an advisory from the state Board of Health concerning “the present influenza situation,” which, “as it grows in force here in our New England states,” was now “taking on a pneumonic form.”

There “seems to be a distinct type of pneumonic influenza,” the report continued. “That pneumonia is a very serious disease, we are all aware.”



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The greater number of cases, however, “never reach the pneumonia state, the disease being a matter of days before the individual is up and around, and on the way to recovery.”

Nonetheless, the disease “is extremely infectious.”

Its mode of spreading “is not entirely clear, but that it passes from person to person very early in the disease there can be little doubt. That it may be, and is, spread in other ways, is very probable.”

How “then may the disease be checked? If all citizens and all people with any symptoms that even suggest the disease will stay at home and have treatment, it will help tremendously.”

That “the prevention of unnecessary public gatherings and the closing of school and places of public amusement will help much, there can be no doubt.”

That these methods alone are sufficient “is very doubtful.”

It “would seem that this epidemic, as that of some 25 years ago, will run its course until the many are infected, the infection being spread by the coming together of people in their daily necessary occupations.”

(The reference to 25 years earlier was probably a reference to the 1889-1890 “Asiatic” or “Russian” flu pandemic, which had killed about a million people worldwide, and caused recurrences through early 1895, according to Wikipedia.)



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“Then what is to be done with the epidemic among us?” the Board’s advisory asked.

We “should surely remain calm and not lose our good sense. We must have confidence (*in*) our physicians and health officers who have the real facts before them.”

It “is true now, undoubtedly due to the war conditions, that there is a very great scarcity of nurses and physicians. So that anyone, who employs a nurse unnecessarily for their comfort or convenience, is open to severe criticism, and no nurse worthy of the name should accept such hire; also anyone, who unnecessarily calls a physician is open to the same criticism.”

The public “must meet the infection prepared. Plenty of sleep, regular meals, without overwork, and remain out in the open as much as possible are cardinal requisites.”

Fear of the disease “constitutes a worry that in itself helps to destroy the natural resources of the body to fight infection.”

Fear of the disease “is purposely mentioned here because some situations arise and, in fact, have already arisen, where the nursing of some of our cases may have to be done by those who have had no training as nurses and too many ‘panicky’ reports founded on information from unreliable sources, will do harm, and is already doing harm, by hindering authorities from getting this necessary help.”

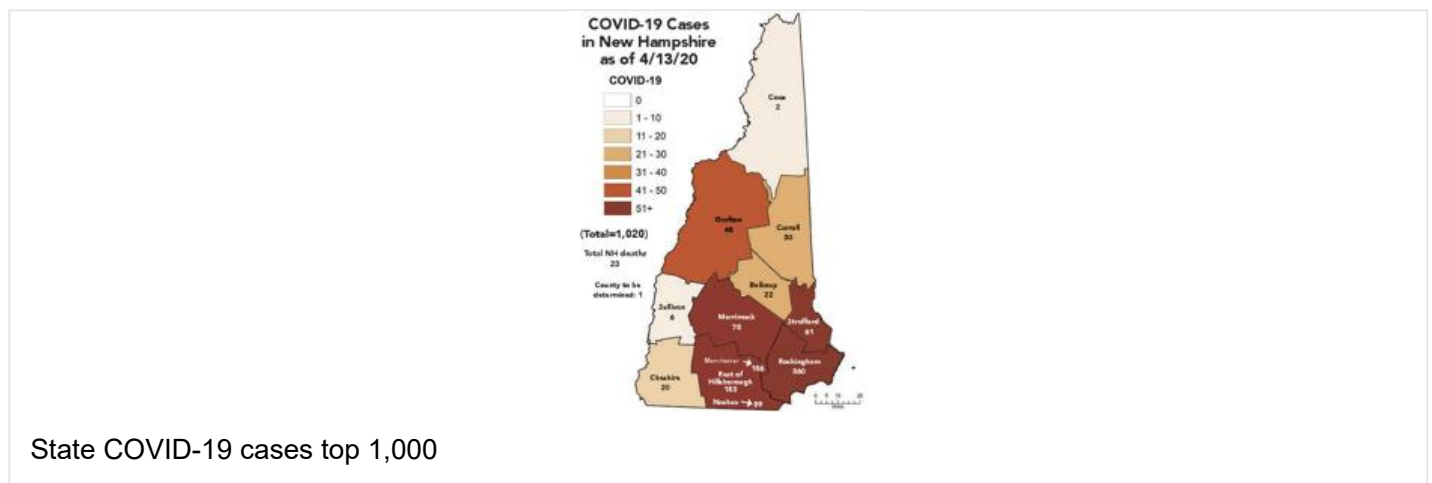
Physicians and health officers “need help and we want a calm, cool public citizen to work with and not one ‘panicky’ and ‘jumpy,’ who will think a hand-clap is a clap of thunder.”

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Note: Information about the 1918 pandemic was taken from “The Deadliest Flu: The Complete Story of the Discovery and Reconstruction of the 1918 Pandemic Virus,” available on-line at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://tinyurl.com/stqg3tr>) and from the CDC’s “1918 Pandemic Influenza Historic Timeline” (<https://tinyurl.com/y83bp7od>).

The local references were taken from the microfilm files of The Laconia Democrat at the Laconia Public Library.

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