

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Impact of 1918 Spanish influenza pandemic on mortality rates in Savannah, GA, and implications for future epidemic prevention

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Background: The Spanish Influenza pandemic struck the United States in waves from September 1918 through March 1919. This study investigates the impact of the Spanish Influenza on Savannah and Chatham County, Georgia.

Methods: Primary death records from the Chatham County Health Department were examined and analyzed for the years of 1917, 1918, and 1919. Historical mortality rates in the Savannah area were compared to those for other parts of the United States and world.

Results: Mortality rates attributed to the Spanish Influenza within Savannah closely paralleled similar flu-related mortality rates for comparison populations in New York, London, and Madrid.

Conclusions: These local primary data enable Savannah public health officials to understand the historical trends of communicable disease mortality in relation to other parts of the world, and have the potential to serve as a reference when channeling future resources into epidemic prevention in Chatham County.