

LIMITS OF MODERN SCIENCE

Video and Discussion Questions

Advances in medicine have prevented the recurrence of another global Influenza outbreak on the scale of a century ago, yet weaknesses to new viruses remain. In his lecture *“Influenza’s Threat: Then and Now,”* Dr. Powel H. Kazanjian, Professor and Chief, Division of Infection Diseases at University of Michigan Medical Center, explored past and present preparedness for pandemics.

Though a lecture from 2018, it draws timely parallels between the COVID-19 outbreak and the Influenza pandemic of 100 years before.

WATCH THE LECTURE: <https://youtu.be/YVdtx4Y-Jzk?t=145>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Public Reporting of the Outbreak (15:03-22:43 - [Jump to video section](#))

- Why was Spain the first country to publicly report about the flu?
- When considering why many countries remained quiet in 1918, do you think that the Pentagon’s [decision to not publicize COVID-19 outbreaks](#) among American military personnel (and [to punish officials who do](#)) follows the same train of thought? Do you agree with this decision? What is the benefit and harm of such a decision?
- Describe the experiences doctors and health professionals had in 1918 with the flu. How does this compare or differ today?

Responding and Adapting to the Outbreak (23:56 – 30:41 - [Jump to video section](#))

- What struggles do today’s health professionals and facilities share with those from 1918?
- How are today’s public policy measures to limit the spread similar or different to those from 1918? Which 1918 measure surprises you the most?
- How are today’s companies supplying their services and products during the current health crisis? How are these similar and different to 1918?
- What is the shared psychological effect of social distancing on society? Do you think this effect was worse in the past, or worse now? Why?

Preparedness Today (31:34 – 44:53 - [Jump to video section](#))

- Consider the emotional transition of being “ferociously afraid” ([31:55](#)) to “global amnesia” ([32:14](#)) of influenza. Why do you think some horrific events fade faster from collective memory than others? Consider pandemics, wars, natural disasters, etc. Do you think COVID-19 will have a different fate? Why or why not?
- When thinking about how viruses originate in animals and spread between animals and people, how does this impact the argument that rural communities are less susceptible to as devastating an outbreak as urban ones?
- Consider what Kazanjian says at [41:15](#). Keep in mind, this lecture was given in 2018, before the COVID-19 pandemic. Why do you think that, despite this and so many other earlier warnings, the world was still unprepared?
- How do you feel about the flu today? When Kazanjian says that vaccines are only 40% effective, does that change how you feel about the flu? Does it change how you feel about treatment for COVID-19?