



Calm, Cool, Courageous – comparisons between 2 pandemics: 1918 & 2020

Verity Spring Blog, 2020 Pandemic History

Written by Deborah Morrow

We dedicate this blog to the devoted verity staff who are caring for our clients on the front lines during a time of unknowns, hardship and fear. Thank you for your service. You are heroes.

Most of us were still enjoying normal activities with family and friends, working and running businesses in late January when B.C.'s first identified case of Covid 19 was made public. Within weeks, our lives changed as Coronavirus rapidly spread into a global health crisis. With supply chain demands stretched, the population concerned itself with avoiding catching the virus and procuring much needed equipment. Businesses closed, health care converted mainly to pandemic management and those who could, stayed at home. We followed CDC guidelines daily and waited for answers and aid.



One hundred years ago, during the Spanish Flu outbreak a woman wears a mask while working in her office

During the Spanish Flu Pandemic, a woman wears a sign that says, "Wear a Mask or go to Jail"



We seem to have a pandemic approximately every 100 years: In 1720, The Plague; 1820, Cholera; 1920, Spanish Flu; 2020, Coronavirus. The first known flu virus was scientifically identified in the late 1800's and scientists now believe that there have been **15** viral pandemics in the last 500 years.

In 1918, following World War 1, the Spanish Flu hit the world hard. The Spanish Flu came in 3 waves; Spring, summer and winter. Despite travel being limited to train and ship, there was greatly increased post war population movement worldwide and consequently no single country seemed to have escaped the Spanish Flu. In late August 1918, military ships departed the English port city of Plymouth carrying troops unknowingly

infected with this new, second wave and far deadlier strain of Spanish flu. As these ships arrived in cities like Brest in France, Boston in the United States and Freetown in west Africa, the second wave of the global pandemic began in earnest.

“The rapid movement of soldiers around the globe was a major spreader of the disease,” says James Harris, an historian at Ohio State University who studies infectious diseases. “The entire military industrial complex of moving lots of men and material in crowded conditions was certainly a huge contributing factor in the ways the pandemic spread.”

Properties of the virus were not clear- knowledge of modes of transmission and vulnerable demographics were not evident until many become ill and scientists attempted to gather anecdotal data. Data was not easily assembled due to limited telecommunications, lack of any global health system organization and the sudden, explosion of unmanaged data. Cases and deaths from Spanish Flu could not really be counted as reporting was impossible.

The Spanish Flu largely affected males between the ages of 20-40 years, pregnant women and people already debilitated.

Those with the then-common tuberculosis were the first to succumb. It was during this time when western populations turned to ‘alternative medicine’ practices, having lost faith in traditional ‘medical model’ medicine. Science could not catch up quickly enough to meet the need.

The population of the world in 1918 was 500 million people. After the Spanish Flu pandemic, the population was reduced to 450 million. The apocalyptic decline in world health from the Spanish Flu saw more lives taken than during the global losses of lives from the First World War.

People were frightened and sought their own treatments- eating oranges was encouraged. **Smoking was also encouraged** as it was thought to be effective in killing the Spanish Flu virus.



Above:
Homemade
cloth masks
in 1918.

Right: One
hundred
years later,
Verity is
making
hundreds of
cloth masks

for staff and clients, not unlike the
homemade ones of 1918



I



A nurse checking on a patient at the Walter Reed Hospital Flu Ward during the influenza pandemic, circa 1918

Harris & Ewing/Underwood Archives/Getty Images

A significant impediment to the management of the Spanish Flu pandemic was the severe worldwide shortage of nurses. Sadly, at that time the American Red Cross had refused to use the trained African American nurses until the pandemic was waning. Today, there is a shortage of caregivers, particularly in Ontario, where the Army has had to come in to look after the elderly. Nursing shortages seem to continue to be a pervasive theme throughout history. Coronavirus has hit the world population hard but science and rapid communication has limited what could have been a lot worse. The front-line caregiving staff are educated and dedicated, have Personal Protective Equipment (PPE's) and are protected by strict protocols. Covid-19 is still a pandemic and we are seeing less fear in health providers with guidelines and knowledge. Work flow and family life has been greatly disrupted. The amount of devastation remains severe however contained in a way that historically was not possible. Let us not be complacent, rather let us remain vigilant and

cautious in case of a second and third wave. We can greatly influence potential tragedy. Verity Home Care will continue to procure PPE's. We are still making cloth masks!



Verity Administrator, Carla Abalos, BSc., wearing a hepafilter cloth mask made by the sewing machines of Verity Home Care. Below: Clients may recognize these Paris masks worn by caregivers



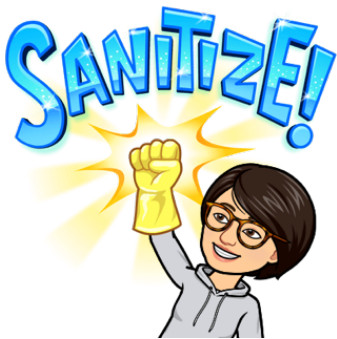
Verity Home Care Photos



A huge thank you to Nurse Kristel Fernandez, BScN, LPN, Team Leader



Masks for Homeless Veterans
Verity Home Care makes masks for the Homeless Veterans for whom we have volunteered our nursing services for many years



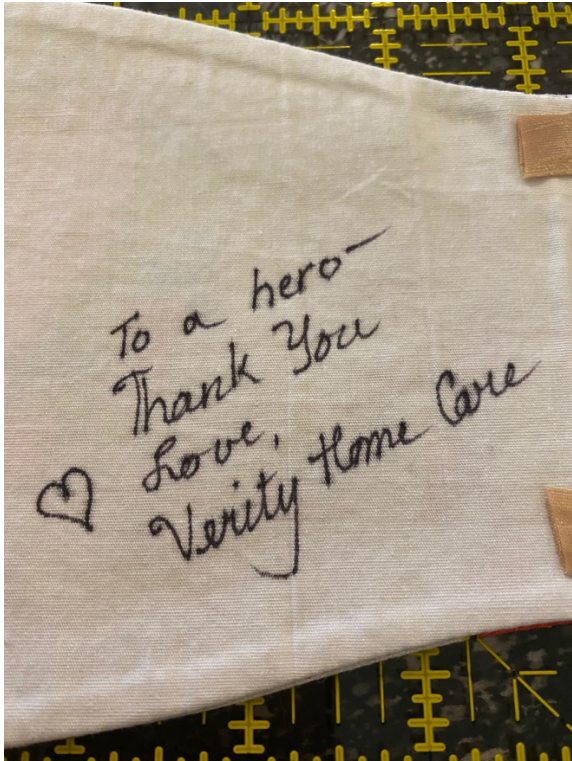
Carla Abalos, BSc, Administrator and scheduling magician! Thank you!



We now have to make our own hand sanitizers as well! If there is a second or even a third wave, Verity is ready. **Every staff member has 2 cloth masks, gloves, goggles, hand sanitizer, face shield and apron.**

See our thank you to staff and clients on the next page.





A note inside every mask to acknowledge the heroism of those staff who remain on the front lines to serve during the most difficult time of their careers.

They would not abandon their clients when they needed them most. Their service is Calm, Cool and Courageous and this history blog is dedicated to them with love.

We also thank our **clients** for their patience in accommodating the need for flexibility with such grace and kindness.

Sincerely,

Deborah

Dame Deborah Morrow, R.N., Chief Nurse and C.E.O., Verity Home Care

