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Perspective

Influenza: The Virus That Shaped History and Continues to Challenge Modern Medicine

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DESCRIPTION

Influenza, commonly known as the flu, is a viral infection that affects the respiratory system. It is highly contagious and can spread easily from person to person, especially during the flu season, which typically runs from november to April in the northern hemisphere (Barr et al., 2018).

Symptoms of the flu can range from mild to severe and can include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, fatigue, and chills. In some cases, the flu can lead to complications such as pneumonia, which can be life-threatening, especially for people with weakened immune systems or underlying medical conditions (Guerra et al., 1998).

The flu is caused by the influenza virus, which is divided into three types: A, B, and C. Influenza A is the most common and can cause severe outbreaks, while influenza B is milder and usually affects children. Influenza C is less common and causes only mild illness (Lycett et al.,2019).

The flu virus is spread through droplets in the air when an infected person talks, coughs, or sneezes. It can also be spread by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Prevention is the key when it comes to the flu. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year. The vaccine is recommended for everyone six months and older and is particularly important for those at higher risk of complications from the flu, including young children, pregnant women, and older adults (Morens et al., 2010).

In addition to getting vaccinated, there are several other steps you can take to reduce your risk of getting the flu, including washing your hands frequently, avoiding close contact with sick people, and staying home if you are sick (Potter et al., 2001).

There are several things it can do to manage the symptoms and prevent complications. These include getting plenty of rest, staying hydrated, and taking over-the-counter medications to reduce fever and alleviate other symptoms (Principi et al., 2018).

Antiviral medications may also be prescribed by a healthcare provider to help reduce the severity of symptoms and shorten the duration of illness. These medications work best when started within the first 48 hours of symptom onset.

Types of influenza viruses

Influenza A: This is the most common type of influenza virus that causes seasonal flu outbreaks. It can infect humans and animals, including birds and pigs. Influenza A viruses are further classified into subtypes based on two proteins on their surface called Hemagglutinin (H) and neuraminidase (N) (Tregoning et al., 2018).

Influenza B: This type of influenza virus causes seasonal flu outbreaks and is less common than influenza A. Influenza B viruses only infect humans and are not classified into subtypes.

Influenza C: This type of influenza virus causes mild respiratory illness and does not cause seasonal flu outbreaks. Influenza C viruses only infect humans and are not classified into subtypes.

It's important to note that the flu viruses can mutate frequently, which is why it's necessary to get a flu vaccine every year to protect against the most prevalent strains (Vemula et al., 2016). The flu is a common and potentially serious illness that can be prevented with vaccination and good hygiene practices. If they do get the flu, it is important to take steps to manage the symptoms and prevent complications. If anyone have concerns about the flu or any other illness, be sure to consult with the healthcare provider.

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