

Centennial Anniversary  
of the  
Influenza  
Pandemic  
of 1918

# The History & Future of Public Health

in Lawrence, Massachusetts and Beyond

INNOVATION | CHALLENGES | OPPORTUNITIES



LAWRENCE HISTORY CENTER | 2018 PUBLIC HEALTH SYMPOSIUM | APRIL 7, 2018

## CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

**Date:** Saturday, April 7, 2018  
**Location:** Everett Mills, 15 Union Street, Lawrence  
**Proposal Deadline:** Friday, December 1, 2017  
**Contact(s):** Susan Grabski, Lawrence History Center, [director@lawrencehistory.org](mailto:director@lawrencehistory.org)  
Professor Robert Farrant, [robert\\_farrant@uml.edu](mailto:robert_farrant@uml.edu)

This symposium is designed for exploration and dialogue, thinking broadly about public health issues through the perspectives of the humanities. The day-long effort will look back at one of the most significant health crises in the history of the United States and open the door to considering contemporary health crises in the country and most particularly in greater Lawrence. Childhood obesity, asthma, diabetes, homelessness, poverty, the opioid crisis, etc. all require civic responses. Taking a careful look at what was done in 1918 and 1919 with respect to the influenza, as well as other important advancements made in sanitation, water filtration, disease control in Lawrence in the early 20th century, allows us to think about how we handle the health crises we face today.

**Background:** In the spring of 1918, the United States was embroiled in World War I, fighting alongside the English, French, and Russians against the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary. In total, 70 million people were at war on multiple fronts across Europe, Russia, the Middle East, and Northern Africa. The tide was finally turning for the Allies after a crushing offensive by German forces mere weeks earlier. Then, a fierce enemy intervened—an outbreak of influenza that would decimate entire regiments and towns, kill civilians and soldiers alike by the millions, and rapidly become a global pandemic. This disease weakened forces on both sides, changing not only the course of the war but also the economies and population stability of every affected nation. In the long term, this particular outbreak would inspire research on an unprecedented scale and lead to advances in science and medicine, forever altering our understanding of epidemiology. From the spring of 1918 to early 1919, no aspect of life remained untouched by the pandemic for Americans at home and on the front. (<https://dp.la/exhibitions/exhibits/show/1918-influenza>)

Almost as quickly as the influenza pandemic appeared in the spring of 1918, the rate of new cases slowed by the end of 1918, then faded away by the spring of 1919. Estimates vary, but the most widely accepted world death tolls reach 25 to 50 million worldwide, with more than 1.5 million of these on American soil, in addition to military losses abroad. In Lawrence, around 2,000 Lawrencians died in 1918 (compared to 1,391 in 1917 and 1,280 in 1919). Many steps were taken to combat this mysterious and deadly epidemic, including the establishment of the Tent City to quarantine the victims.

## Possible symposium proposal topics include, but are not limited to:

- How Lawrence, MA (and/or other similar urban settings) responded to the 1918 Influenza Epidemic? What was learned in those efforts to treat and contain the disease, its impact overall?
- Major events in the history of public health in Lawrence, Massachusetts and the U.S., the impact of vaccines.
- Critical advancements made in sanitation, water filtration, disease control, etc. in the late 19th/early 20th centuries in Lawrence, MA.
- Treatment of Tuberculosis, locally (Lawrence Tuberculosis Hospital, 1909) and regionally, and current treatments for immigrant populations.
- The Polio Epidemic, FDR's impact on public perception of those with disabilities.
- Study of the Lawrence Survey, funded by the White Fund, which documented living conditions in the city in 1911.
- Survey of public health in Lawrence: 2010 - current
- History and current initiatives of local public health providers in Greater Lawrence.
- Occupational Health: History of risk factors in the workplace from working hours, salary, maternity leave policy to respiratory diseases, hearing loss, stress related disorders, communicable diseases and others.
- Health equity and social justice: Access to health services and care for poor and homeless populations / environmental disparities in poor, urban communities.
- Studies of immigrant health from first generation forward.
- The impact of substance abuse on individuals and families, e.g. prescription medication overdose, opioids, alcohol.
- The stigma of disease and its impact from influenza to HIV/AIDS to mental health and opioid addiction.
- HIV/AIDS and the failed local and national response
- Education and factors impacting student health in Lawrence and similar communities.
- Impact of limited access to healthy food and fresh produce in urban neighborhoods.
- Impact of the park and playground movement/equitable green spaces initiatives on public health and well-being within urban areas.

We welcome papers, panels, narrative art, short videos, and photo essays on, but not limited to, the topics listed above from community members, community organizations, scholars, practitioners, researchers, funding organizations, middle/high school, and undergraduate/graduate students. Individual and panel presentations welcome.

Note: We endeavor to publish select papers in an edited anthology.

### Submission Guidelines

Those intending to participate should:

1. Prepare proposal as an attachment in MS Word or a .pdf (300-350 words)
2. Prepare a brief presenter biography (200 words)
3. Include in the body of the email relevant contact information: the author(s), department(s) and affiliation(s), mailing address(es), email address(es); and phone number(s).
4. Email proposal, bio, and contact information to Susan Grabski at [director@lawrencehistory.org](mailto:director@lawrencehistory.org) by December 1, 2017.

### Deadlines

**Friday, December 1, 2017** – Proposals /presenter bio(s) to [director@lawrencehistory.org](mailto:director@lawrencehistory.org)

**Friday, January 26, 2018** – Successful applicants notified

**Friday, February 16, 2018** – Applicants to confirm their participation

**March 18, 2018** - Submission of draft papers/presentations outlines due

**Note:** All participants/presenters will be asked to pay a \$35 registration fee for the day to offset expenses (e.g., breakfast, lunch, the keynote speaker, technology in the presentation rooms, space rental, etc.). If this poses a problem, please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate a reduced fee.

**Questions?** Please visit <http://www.lawrencehistory.org/education/symposium/2018> or contact:

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