### Epidemics in Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Disease</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1875-76</td>
<td>Scarlet Fever</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Influenza</td>
<td>800,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
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<tr>
<td>1918-28</td>
<td>Encephalitis Lethargica</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>NSW</td>
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<tr>
<td>1918-19</td>
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<td>14,000</td>
<td>8573</td>
<td>NSW</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1830-80</td>
<td>Scarlet Fever</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1836-38</td>
<td>Influenza</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897-1940</td>
<td>Smallpox</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>8573</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894-1932</td>
<td>Plague</td>
<td>1921-25</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
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<td>Scarlet Fever</td>
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<td>NSW</td>
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<tr>
<td>1890-93</td>
<td>Scarlet Fever</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>458</td>
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### Mortality & Morbidity “Crises”

- Long history of epidemic/pandemic encounters.
- Limited demographic effects but major psycho-social impacts.
- Some became prime cause of public health reform (e.g. plague and smallpox).
- Challenged government’s comprehension and management of extreme natural events.
- Throw into sharp perspective the internal structure, workings and hidden tensions and conflicts of Australian society.
- Highlight inadequacies and deficiencies in response procedures and the difficulties of (Colony-Colony) State-State and State-Commonwealth cooperation.

### Pandemics and Australia/New Zealand

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<td>1857-60</td>
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<td>Plague</td>
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### Major Dengue Epidemics 1897-1993

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<tr>
<td>1897-98</td>
<td>Scarlet Fever</td>
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<td>1904-05</td>
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<td>1910-11</td>
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<td>c.120</td>
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<td>1925-26</td>
<td>Dengue</td>
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<td>1941-43</td>
<td>Dengue</td>
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<tr>
<td>1981-82</td>
<td>Dengue</td>
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<td>Qld</td>
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<td>1992-93</td>
<td>Dengue</td>
<td>c. 30,000</td>
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<td>Qld</td>
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</table>
Scarlet Fever 1875 – 1876 – One of Australia’s Greatest Childhood Epidemics

- Probably more than 8,000 deaths
- 3,225 deaths in Victoria – 87% under 10 years of age
- More than 2,000 deaths in NSW
- Epidemic also affected SA and Tas.
- New issues of isolation, disinfection and quarantine
- Restrictions on children attending school
- Cleansing and fumigation public places and houses
- Rubbish removal
- Effective drainage
- Empowerment of Boards of Health
- Medical attention for sick at home

Smallpox in Sydney 1881 - 1882

- 163 cases, 41 deaths in Sydney
- Formal isolation and quarantine cases and contacts [900]
- Cleansing, scavenging and fumigation
- Vaccination [61,000]“Priority List”
- Media involvement
- Widespread human reaction – fear and panic
- Scape-goating and ‘dobbing’
- Disease and the political agenda

Influenza 1890 - 1891

- More than 800,000 cases.
- 130,000 cases, 234 deaths in Sydney
- Australia swept up in pandemic
- Established isolation and quarantine procedures not appropriate
- Public education campaign
- “Home quarantine”
- Avoidance of crowds
- Personal hygiene and avoidance strategies

Plague 1900- 09, 1921-25

- More than 1370 cases and 535 deaths ( 23 cases in NZ)
- 607 cases, 197 deaths in Sydney, 377 cases and 159 deaths in Brisbane
- Formal isolation and quarantine of cases and contacts [1800 in 1900]
- Area quarantine, cleansing, fumigation, demolition, special burials
- Vector control program “Rat Wednesday” 1902
- Inoculations [10,000 in 1900]
- Media involvement
- Public reaction – fear, hysteria and panic
- Scape-goating
- Fear of plague produced Dept. of Public Health in NZ

Removal of Plague Case
The Rocks 1900

Quarantine & Barricades 1900

Hosted by Jane Barnett  jane@webbertraining.com
A Webber Training Teleclass  www.webbertraining.com
Demolition of Chinese Dwelling 1900

Quarantine & Fumigation 1900

Cleansing Operations 1900

Smallpox in NSW 1913 - 1917

- More than 2,900 cases, 4 deaths in NSW [2,019 cases in Sydney – 1517 in 1913]
- Federal Quarantine imposed
- Commonwealth/State rivalry/confrontation
- Emotional public debate re compulsory vaccination
- Community response re vaccination [c. 520,000]

Influenza 1918-1919

- 1918 “13 Point” plan
- 30-37% of Australians had flu.
- c.14,000 deaths [42% of all deaths in the City of Sydney in 1918 were from flu]; 8,573 deaths in NZ. NZ death rate - 7.4/1000 compared with 2.6/1000 in Australia. Maori death rate - 42.3/1000.
- Pressure on health care facilities-Jan-Sep more than 14,000 admitted to hospital in NSW – only 2,000 beds available.
- Public reaction
- State, Commonwealth, local antagonisms/rivalries – lack of agreement. States went their own way.
- Closure public places/events
- Wearing of masks
- Border isolation camps
- Role of media
- NZ pandemic produced new Ministry of Health

Challenges & Lessons From the Past

- Cooperation between all Levels of Government, business and the local community.
- Understanding & Managing Public Reaction.
- Confronting Vested Interests.
- Issues of Isolation & Quarantine.
- Impacts on the Healthcare System.
- Issues of Inoculation & Vaccination.
- Targeting Vectors.
- The Role of the Media.
- Changing Public Behaviour.
- Business, trade and Epidemics.
Cooperation Between all Levels of Government

- Cooperation can not be taken for granted.
- History of conflict, rivalries and jealousies between local authorities, the business community and central government, between States and with Commonwealth.
- In times of crisis, formal accords and agreements mean nothing – e.g., 1913, 1919, 1921.

Understanding Public Reaction & Managing Fear

- Dissonance between how experts and ordinary people perceive risk.
- Deep-seated fears about infection and contagion.
- Judgements made on basis of familiarity, control and consequence.
- Panic, fear and hysteria - Emotional contagion.
- Fear as a "social vaccine"
- Fear focuses attention on the particular rather than the general.
- The politicisation of fear
- Role of media.
- Official actions may heighten public fears.
- Social conflicts - search for scape-goats.
- Behaviour reverts after crisis.

"The brilliancy of modern discoveries blinds incautious eyes to old truths and often endangers sound practice".

Ashburton-Thompson, 1899

Broadcast live from the annual conference of the New Zealand National Division of Infection Control Nurses

www.nzno.org.nz/Site/Sections/Sections/InfectionControl