The Spanish Flu

Dr. Milorad Radusin in his article payed extremely high attention to diagnostic difficulties, especially during the first wave of the Spanish flu epidemic and particularly with respect to the distinction between the Spanish flu and pneumonia, which frequently led, as a complication, to fatal outcomes, having a further reflection also on hospital records of the diseased and dead.

Here are some more details which confirm this very connection.

In the report of the hospital Griton and Newnham Unit, which was situated in Thessaloniki within the Scottish Women’s Hospitals (SWH) from 1915 to 1918 the following was mentioned, too: “122 patients were treated in the Ward from October 1 till December 31, 1918; 74 of the latter were admitted with influenza, mainly French. There were no fatal cases; 16 were admitted with lung complications, 7 died. Of the surgical cases, 24 got the influenza, five of which developed pneumonia. All got well. 8 cases occurred among Serbian orderlies (working under the supervision of nurses). There were no complications, they all got well. This points out to the significance of nursing in the case of influenza, having a fatal outcome only when it is complicated by pneumonia.”

In the 6-month report of SWH, the hospital “America”, situated in Vranje (1918/19) (end of October 1918 – May 1919) it was indicated that 334 cases were registered as suffering from influenza, whereas 500 diseased were at the same time recorded as suffering from pneumonia, bronchitis, TBC, although a certain number of pneumonia cases were quite certainly complications of the Spanish flu. In the 3-month report for May, June and July 1919, a distinction had been made between pneumonia and bronchitis (total of 84 cases) on one hand and tuberculosis (87) on the other, whereas influenza was still recorded separately (10 cases). However, already in the 6-month report on mortality, the Spanish flu and pneumonia were classified together: Influenza & pneumonia = 80, with the same occurring in the following 3-month report: Influenza & pneumonia = 2.

REFERENCES