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Jasper County 1918 Influenza Case Study

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This poster describes a case study looking at the impact of the 1918 influenza pandemic in Jasper County, Missouri. The data used was collected from the Missouri Digital History Project and the Jasper News. This new variant of influenza, known as H1N1, was unusual because it was more deadly than a typical flu, especially in the young and middle-adulthood age group. Jasper County felt the full force of the pandemic by October, 1918. Deaths from influenza and pneumonia increased significantly toward the end of October and began to slowly decline until the first week in December. Using newspaper data from the Jasper News, I created a timeline to help us understand why we see peaks and valleys in the mortality curve. Public health restrictions, as reported in the newspaper, seem to correlate with changes in mortality. Jasper County was notable due to its uneven mortality by sex. More men (569) than women (452) died, likely due to the high population of miners that worked within the county. At the time, Jasper County was the center of the Tri-State Mining District, a world-class producer of zinc and lead. Working conditions that miners experienced caused them to be more at risk for lung diseases such as silicosis and tuberculosis. By 1910, Jasper County experienced so many cases of these diseases that a hospital was built and opened in September of 1918 to directly fight this problem. Of the 569 men that died due to the influenza and pneumonia, 121 were miners. The combination of these two diseases along with the 1918 influenza could have affected the mortality rate, which could be the reason why we see the difference in the sex ratio.