History of influenza pandemics
History of Influenza

- 412 BC - first mentioned by Hippocrates
- 1580 - first pandemic described
- 1580 - 1900 - 28 pandemics
## Influenza pandemics in last century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Strain</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of confirmed human deaths (UK)</th>
<th>Global deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1918-19</td>
<td>H1N1</td>
<td>“Spanish” Flu</td>
<td>250,000</td>
<td>20-40 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
<td>H2N2</td>
<td>“Asian” Flu</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-69</td>
<td>H3N2</td>
<td>“Hong Kong” Flu</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>1 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Circulating Influenza strains and pandemics in 20th Century

20-40 million deaths 1 million deaths 1 million deaths

H1N1  H2N2  H3N2  H1N1

1920  1940  1960  1980  2000
The influenza epidemic taxed the resources of The Red Cross.

Military physicians were baffled by the mysterious illness that was striking young, healthy soldiers.

As sailors and soldiers fell ill, doctors puzzled over the mystery illness they were confronting.
Lessons from past pandemics

- Occurs unpredictably, not always in winter
- Great variations in mortality, severity of illness and pattern of illness or age most severely affected
- Rapid surge in number of cases over brief period of time, often measured in weeks
- Tend to occur in waves - subsequent waves may be more or less severe

Key lesson - unpredictability