

THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

pro bono humani generis

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Dr Edmund S. Morgan
244 Livingston St
New Haven CT 06511

Dear Dr Morgan

Thank you for your illuminating letter about 1918-flu and the ~1740 diphtheria epidemic. I had not been aware of the severity of that outbreak. I did check the NLM catalog to be sure they had the Caulfield - Throat Distemper - and was reassured I could locate it as might be needed.

Whilst there, I did also notice -- fyi --

Stettler, H. L.
The New England throat distemper and family size
p. 17-30.
Baltimore : Johns Hopkins Press, [c1970].
In: Klarman HE, ed: Empirical studies in health economics;
Proceedings of the second Conference on the Economics of Health

For my own future reference, I also ran a citation search on Calfield 1939, and enclose a copy.

I also perused Rosen's History of Public Health, and read of a mortality rate for diphtheria in 1894 of 785/100,000 ! Perhaps the cohort is only young children, but even so that's a good match for 1918.

So perhaps such high mortality from infectious disease was an ordinary fact of recent memory in 1918! Do you know of tables of life expectancy or crude mortality prior to 1900?

Yours sincerely,


Joshua Lederberg