

Researchers Find Validity in 1918 Treatment for Avian Influenza

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USU faculty have discovered that a treatment for the Spanish Influenza pandemic may also be effective for current Avian Influenza patients.

Navy Capt. Edward Kilbane, Army Col. Jeffrey Jackson and Navy Lt. Cmdr. Thomas Luke, are all alumni and faculty of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU). They, along with retired Navy physician, Capt. Stephen Hoffman, published their research Tuesday, Aug. 29, in the online edition of the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

The four researchers analyzed medical literature reported during the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918 to 1920. They found that transfusions with blood products from Spanish Flu survivors may have reduced the risk of death in seriously ill Spanish Flu patients.

The meta-analysis of these data show that treatment of patients in 1918 with convalescent whole blood, plasma or serum obtained from humans who had recovered from Spanish Influenza resulted in a reduced mortality of seriously ill patients by 50 percent.

The next steps would be a study to determine if treatment of patients with convalescent plasma containing anti-H5N1 antibodies from recovered from patients could lead to similar results for patients with Avian Influenza.

“Plasma is produced in local hospitals worldwide and transfusions might

be useful in treating bird flu patients during outbreaks and pandemics, especially in light of the limitations of existing treatment options,” Commander Luke said. “A single recovered bird-flu patient could donate a weekly volume of plasma sufficient to treat many patients with H5N1 influenza.”

Their article titled, “Convalescent Blood Products for Spanish Influenza Pneumonia: A Future H5N1 Treatment?” will be published in the Oct. 17 print edition of *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Source: Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences

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