The Spanish Flu of 1918 and Coronavirus: A Look At the Humanitarian and Economic Implications
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Humanitarian Implications

Though the emergence of the Coronavirus is considered a novelty, historically speaking, it has a precedent in the “Spanish Flu” and the worldwide pandemic of 1918.

- Estimated 500 million people contracted the Spanish Flu
- Between 17 and 50 million people died

“The flu spread in three waves: the first in the spring of 1918, the second and most deadly from September 1918 to January 1919, and the third from February 1919 through the end of the year. The first two waves were intensified by the final years of World War I.” (Maas, 2020) Due to the poor hygiene from WWI, people from all ages were uncharacteristically susceptible to the virus. Many scientists believe this is one of the main contributors to the high mortality rate for young adults.

Spanish Flu: Economic Implications

- The U.S. GDP declined by 1.5%
- U.S. consumption declined by 2.1% (Maas, 2020)
- UK estimated a drop of 6% in real GDP (Clark, 2020)

Coronavirus: Economic Implications

- U.S. Real GDP decreased by 3.5% due to the impact of the coronavirus.

“The decrease in real GDP in 2020 reflected decreases in PCE, exports, private inventory investment, nonresidential fixed investment, and state and local government that were partly offset by increases in federal government spending and residential fixed investment.” (Mataloni, 2021)

The effects from the Spanish Flu were enormous. The disproportionate amount of young adults who succumbed to the virus left the world in tatters.

Despite the high survival rate of coronavirus, there have still been many problems that country leaders have had to face. Namely, the negative economic effects on GDP. The regulations put into place in the name of “safety” and “stopping the spread” has given rise to numerous humanitarian issues, such as suicide, hatred and violence towards particular people groups, and the overall mental health of people from all age, economic, and social backgrounds.

“… suicide rates predicted increases ranging from 1% to 145%…” (John, 2020)

> Works Cited


