

Measles too dangerous to ignore

As a society, we have made such progress against once-common illnesses that we forget they are still around and still potentially life-threatening. The measles outbreak in Southeast Washington exemplifies what can happen if we lower our vigilance – and our vaccinations.

High rates of vaccination kept measles under control in the U.S., with about 60 cases annually during 2000 to 2010, according to the Mayo Clinic. In recent years, that average has climbed to 205 cases, most often among people who either were unvaccinated or did not know whether they were. There were 350 cases in the U.S. last year.

As of this writing, 35 confirmed cases and 11 suspected cases have occurred this month in Clark County, Washington, and one in Oregon's Multnomah County. At least 30 of the patients had not been immunized – even though getting the combined measles-mumps-rubella vaccine is safer than contracting measles.

Measles is so contagious, and potentially fatal in young children, that Washington Gov. Jay Inslee has declared a state of emergency. People who visited more than 40 locations in the Vancouver-Portland area might have been exposed.

"It's one of the most contagious viruses we have. It can have really serious complications," said Dr. Alan Melnick, the Clark County health officer. "And it's entirely preventable with an incredibly cheap and safe vaccine."

But the measles vaccination rate in Clark County was only 78 percent.

People forget that measles killed hundreds of people each year, and caused serious health complications for thousands more, before the disease was declared eradicated in the U.S. at the start of the 21st century.

But measles persisted elsewhere. Around the world, more than 100,000 people die from measles each year, most of them children under age 5.

The measles outbreak in the Vancouver-Portland area, combined with an increase in flu cases, has caused some Oregon hospitals to restrict visitors.

Flu is so common that people often forget about its potential consequences as well. Yet influenza and related complications killed an estimated 80,000 Americans last winter, far above a typical year because last year's vaccine was not as effective.

The influenza virus mutates, so each year's vaccine is formulated to provide immunity against the strains considered most probable to cause an outbreak. That is why getting a flu vaccine each year matters. Many Americans don't do so.

Influenza and related conditions hospitalized 1,562 people in Oregon last year and led to the deaths of three children. Although last year's vaccine was less effective, an Oregon Health Authority study found that seniors who got high-dose flu shots were less likely to be hospitalized.

"Pandemic," a popular board game, shows how easily diseases can spread. The Vancouver-Portland measles outbreak is not nearly an epidemic, let alone a pandemic. Neither is this year's flu season in Oregon.

But it is worth noting that this winter is the 100th anniversary of the worst pandemic in recorded history. As the flu mutated into a global killer, it took the lives of 50 million to 100 million people, including about 675,000 in the U.S. during the course of one year.

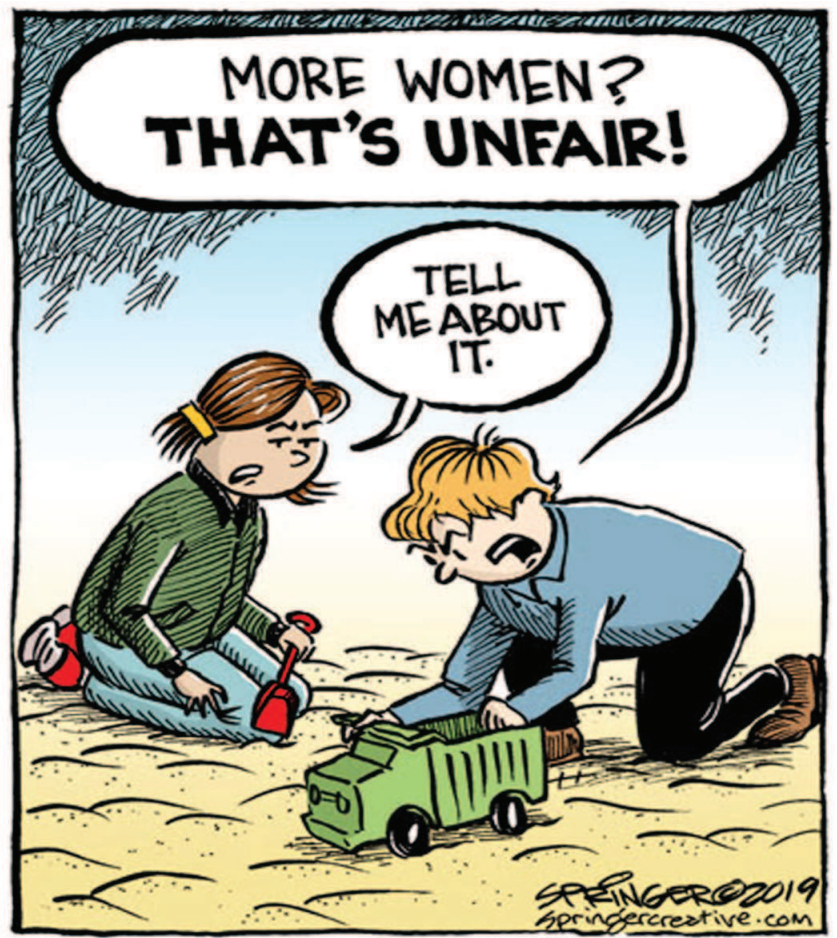
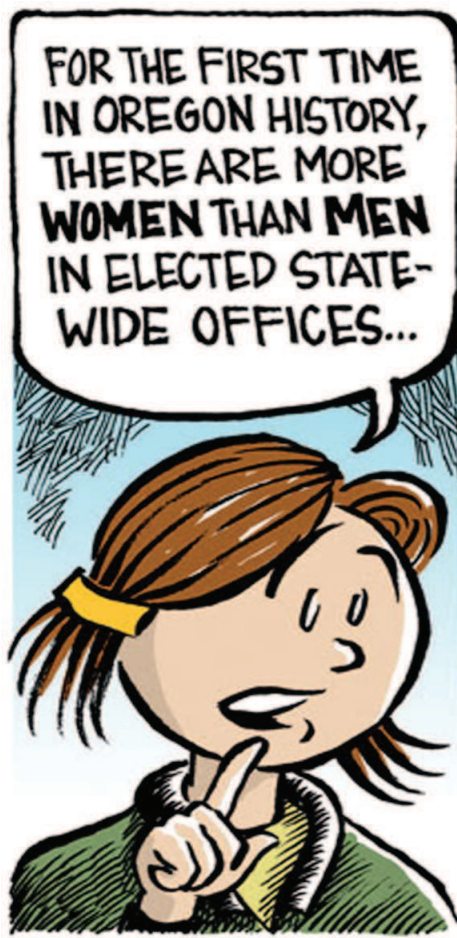
This grim anniversary is a reminder that we dare not forget the past, ignore what could happen in the future – or fail to get our vaccinations.

To quote a Washington Post story from last year about the pandemic, "the 1918 nightmare serves a reminder. If a virulent enough strain were to emerge again, a century of modern medicine might not save millions from dying."

There were no worthwhile flu vaccines in 1917-18. There are today, just as there is a measles vaccine.

GUEST EDITORIAL

Blue Mountain Eagle



Mom and dad, cool it

If you are the mother or father of a high school athlete here in Oregon, this message is primarily for you.

When you attend an athletic event that involves your son or daughter, cheer to your heart's content, enjoy the camaraderie that high school sports offer and have fun. But when it comes to verbally criticizing game officials or coaches, cool it.

Make no mistake about it. Your passion is admired, and your support of the hometown team is needed. But so is your self-control. Yelling, screaming and berating the officials humiliates your child, annoys those sitting around you, embarrasses your child's school and is the primary reason Oregon has an alarming shortage of high school officials.

It's true. According to a recent survey by the National Association of Sports Officials, more than 75 percent of all high school officials say "adult

GUEST EDITORIAL

Karissa Niehoff

behavior" is the primary reason they quit. And 80 percent of all young officials hang up their stripes after just two years of whistle blowing. Why? They don't need your abuse.

Plus, there's a ripple effect. There are more officials over 60 than under 30 in many areas. And as older, experienced officials retire, there aren't enough younger ones to replace them. If there are no officials, there are no games. The shortage of licensed high school officials is severe enough in some areas that athletic events are being postponed or cancelled — especially at the freshman and junior varsity levels.

Research confirms that participa-

tion in high school sports and activities instills a sense of pride in school and community, teaches lifelong lessons like the value of teamwork and self-discipline and facilitates the physical and emotional development of those who participate. So, if the games go away because there aren't enough men and women to officiate them, the loss will be infinitely greater than just an "L" on the scoreboard. It will be putting a dent in your community's future.

If you would like to be a part of the solution to the shortage of high school officials, you can sign up to become a licensed official at highschoolofficials.com. Otherwise, adult role models at high school athletic events here in Oregon are always welcome.

Karissa Niehoff is the executive director of the National Federation of State High School Associations. Peter Weber is the executive director of the Oregon School Activities Association.

LETTERS to the EDITOR

Gun bills infringe on Constitution

I note with anger that you hid info on the pending gun bills on page 15 of the latest edition of the Chieftain.

I am an 83-year-old former Marine who served 22 months in combat in Vietnam.

I also remember the 19-year-old kid who took a round to his chest while saving my life.

Would you have taken his rifle away from him?

The 2nd Amendment says, "shall not be infringed." That makes these members of our State Congress infringers of our rights.

Bob Geller
Joseph

Where's the conservative voice in Salem?

I had to laugh out loud at the front page article "A Citizens Guide to finding your voice at the Capitol!" If you are a God fearing, patriotic conserva-

tive you haven't had a voice in Salem in over 30 years!

Jerry Crandall
Joseph, Oregon

Oregon debates gun reform

I read the article in the latest Chieftain, regarding Oregon SB501. The article said it would require you to get a permit for any gun transaction. The article fails to mention, it is much more than that.

SB501 requires: (1) A ban on magazines holding more than five rounds. (2) Limits purchases to 20 rounds per month. (3) Permits for gun purchases. (4) Background check on ammo purchase. And (5) 14 day waiting period.

SB501 is without a doubt the worst gun law proposal yet, with more hidden problems than one can see. This bill was conceived by a "church" group in Portland, along with some

Lake Oswego students. Apparently by people that know little to nothing about guns, but seek to disarm the legal gun owners of Oregon. Make no mistake.

This is a direct attack on the Second Amendment rights of every legal gun owner in Oregon. Everyone needs to contact Salem and voice their opposition to such insanity. Remember the "mid-terms", when the wishes of 5 counties, outweighed the votes in the rest of the 31 counties in Oregon. If you don't think something like this could ever pass, you would be mistaken.

It is time for the rest of Oregon to voice its opinion, in no uncertain terms. These attacks on the rights of Oregonians, perpetrated by the Liberals on the West side, has to come to an end. Pay attention people. Your rights are on the line, yet once again. What are you going to do?

Doug Dutton
Joseph, Oregon

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The White House —

1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20500; Phone-comments: 202-456-1111; Switchboard: 202-456-1414.

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U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley,

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U.S. Rep. Greg Walden,

R (Second District) — 1404 Longworth Building, Washington D.C. 20515. Phone: 202-225-6730. No direct e-mail because of spam. Web site: www.walden.house.gov Fax: 202-225-5774. Medford office: 14 North Central, Suite 112, Medford, OR 97501. Phone: 541-776-4646. Fax: 541-779-0204.

Pending Bills

For information on bills in Congress — Phone: 202-225-1772.

Salem

Gov. Kate Brown, D — 160 State Capitol, Salem 97310. Phone: 503-378-4582. Fax: 503-378-8970. Web site: www.governor.state.or.us/governor.html.

Oregon Legislature —

State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Web site: www.leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).

State Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove (District 58) —

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For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators, 800-332-2313.

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