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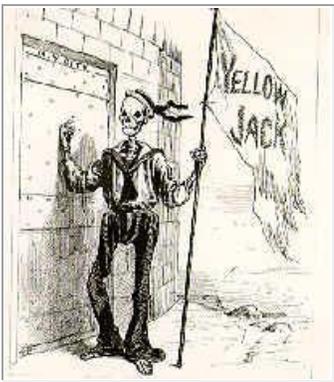
U.S. History- Ponder

Chapter 20- Imperialism

Yellow Fever and the Spanish American War

Yellow fever is a devastating viral disease that can cause bleeding from the eyes, nostrils, anus and other mucous membranes. This terrible illness often also causes black-colored, blood-filled vomit, and the deterioration of the liver, kidneys, and heart. Yellow bile pigments from the damaged liver color the skin, giving the disease its name. Those who do not survive usually die between four and eight days after they first show symptoms. There is still no known cure for the disease. Before 1898, yellow fever had always been a puzzle, because it strikes many people at once as an epidemic, yet it isn't directly contagious from one person to another. Sadly, yellow fever epidemics have been common throughout history.

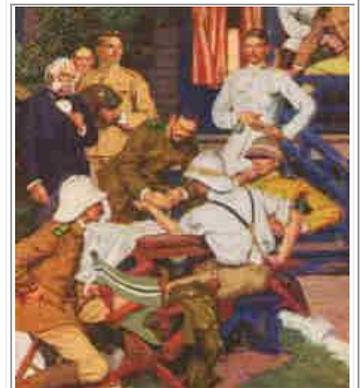
Although many researchers had been trying to solve the mystery of the yellow fever epidemic throughout the nineteenth century, it was the short Spanish-American War of 1898 that provided the pressure which resulted in a solution. The United States had gone to war with Spain to support rebels in Cuba and Puerto Rico who wanted to be free from violent and repressive Spanish control. The American public was particularly supportive of the rebels because of the "yellow journalism" of William Randolph Hearst, who published a series of exaggerated stories on Spanish atrocities. When the U.S.S. Maine was sunk in an Havana port, battle cries of "Remember the Maine" sent the U.S. into war against Spain. The U.S. defeated Spain in less than one year, because of its naval superiority. Early in the war, a severe yellow fever epidemic broke out among Cuban peasants and American soldiers stationed in Havana.



Yellow fever had been such a formidable enemy of our troops that it had its own nickname, "Yellow Jack".

For many years scientists had struggled with solving the problem of the puzzling epidemic, but it wasn't until the outbreak of yellow fever in

Havana, during the Spanish-American War, that the problem was solved by an American-led team of scientists. The U.S. army was incredibly motivated by the war to halt this deadly epidemic, which could be fatal to their soldiers. In an effort to find ways to control yellow fever epidemics, the U.S. Surgeon General commissioned a team of researchers, led by army medical scientist Dr. Walter Reed, to go to Cuba and accelerate all efforts to figure out how the disease spread. Dr. Reed had considered many ideas, and began testing them, including the fifty-year-old suggestion of a Dr. Carlos Finlay that yellow fever might be spread by insects. Epidemics seemed to move along the course of wind currents, and they would stop when cold stopped mosquitoes from breeding. Dr. Reed's bold experiments proved that yellow fever was indeed spread by the bite of the mosquito *Aedes aegypti*. He had one set of volunteers sleep on the soiled clothes and beds of yellow fever patients in a room screened so that no mosquitoes could get in. None of these people contracted the disease. He had another group of volunteers stay completely away from sick patients, except he let mosquitoes that had been allowed to feast first on people sick with the disease bite the patients. These volunteers did get sick. There was no doubt: although yellow fever was not directly contagious from one person to another, it was spread by insect bites.



Dr. Walter Reed and team shown battling yellow fever in Cuba.

Dr. Reed's discovery had an immediate and powerful effect and has since rid much of the world of this horrible disease. As a result of his discovery, yellow fever patients were kept in rooms with mosquito screens, and any nearby wet breeding grounds of the insect were destroyed. Within three months, yellow fever was eliminated from Havana, for the first time in over 150 years! Similarly, the same techniques were used a few years later in Panama, which had suffered regular and devastating yellow fever epidemics. Panama has not seen even a single case since. It is widely held that it was only then possible to build the Panama Canal. This is another example of how the pressures of war can lead to a powerful and useful medical innovation.

Answer the following questions on the Article:

1. How did the disease, yellow fever, get its name?
2. How long did those affected by the yellow fever live?
3. Why couldn't anyone solve the puzzle of curing "yellow fever" for so long?
4. What is the name of the man that did most of the "yellow journalism" of the Spanish American War? What did he make Americans push for?
5. For what reason did the U.S. defeat Spain (what did they have that Spain did not)?
6. Who was the leader of the medical team the U.S. sent to solve the problem of "yellow fever"?
7. Who was the original thinker that thought that insects may have been the source of yellow fever?
8. What insect carried the "yellow fever"? How did they prove this (volunteers)?
9. How did they solve the problem of the yellow fever epidemic (two things)?
10. What did the techniques allow to be built a few years later (without problems of yellow fever?)