

## COVID-19: The same, but different.

## Part 1 of 4

## March 2021

### ☀️ **Aye, this is not the Middle Ages**

A Scottish GP, Gavin Francis, who practices community medicine in the nation's urban capital as well as the rural Orkney Islands, reports how a disgruntled Edinburgh patient, early in the COVID-19 pandemic (~ March 2020) grumbled to the good doctor when forced to self-isolate "This isn't the Middle Ages". Aye and nae, the likeness could even predate that era, as the GP recounts in his recent report-cum-novel [Intensive Care: A GP, a Community & Covid-19](#).



### ☀️ **The 17C bubonic plague, 100 years on**

The layout and title chapters of Francis' account are deliberately copied from an ancient account of London's 1665 bubonic plague [Journal of the Plague Year](#). Written by Daniel Defoe in 1772, it is based on a journal written and maintained by Defoe's uncle, discovered a century later.

### ☀️ **A 21C viewpoint on "Cough of Perinthus"**

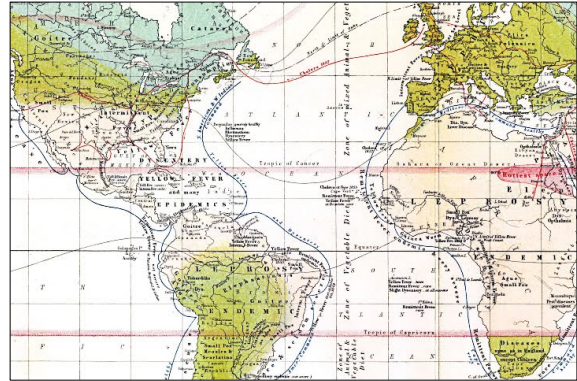
25 centuries past his time, Hippocrates continues to be considered the father of modern medicine, chiefly in the branch of infectious diseases. In 2008, a group of scientists published a study [Insights into infectious disease in the era of Hippocrates](#), concluding that "modern clinicians and researchers continue to be attracted to these 'lessons' from the past – lessons that remain extremely valuable." Of the many types of infectious diseases reported by Hippocrates, it is the chapter on an epidemic characterized by a cough, that the authors highlight:

*The most notorious episode related to infectious diseases in the Corpus Hippocraticum is the epidemic 'Cough of Perinthus', a winter epidemic of an upper respiratory tract infection and its consequences.*

NASA is on to the "Cough of Perinthus" in [Could COVID-19 Have Seasons? Searching for Signals in Earth Data](#), listing its symptoms as fevers, chills, laboured breathing, pneumonia, and sometimes death.

### ☀️ **Clear seasonal rhythms circa 1856**

The map and citation below are taken from the aforementioned NASA article, demonstrating that viruses as well as diseases are seasonal in nature.



The idea that viral infections follow seasonal rhythms and geographic patterns is not new. This 1856 map by a Scottish cartographer shows prominent viruses and diseases (such as smallpox, goiter, and yellow fever) in relation to temperature and latitude. (Map by Alexander Keith-Johnston courtesy of the [David Rumsey Map Collection](#).)

### ☀️ **So, what's new?... Or, is it?**

To date, researchers of both ancient and modern pandemics have not explored its effect on access to food, or the current term, food insecurity. Food hoarding during COVID-19 has been widely noted, is regarded as a symptom of anxiety ([led to a freezer shortage in the USA](#)) and publicly discouraged, but not the outcome hoarding is an attempt to avoid. Statistics Canada's [Food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic, May 2020](#) cites approximately 15% of Canadians surveyed as coping with food insecurity as situations range from food not lasting until there is money to buy more – to - simply not eating, though hungry. Absence from work (laid off, business closure or personal circumstances) and children in the household were directly proportional to reported food insecurity. Some coping mechanisms include(d) adults skipping meals or eating less to ensure children are adequately fed. This is assuredly not a new outcome of a pandemic; however, it is now documented as an inevitable consequence.

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