

Wastewater & Disease



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When you are asked about the cost of treatment and why is it so expensive, your reply could be some historical notes:

1700BC Ahead of his time by a few thousand years, King Minos of Crete, had running water in his bathrooms in the palace at Knossos. Although there is no evidence of plumbing and sewage systems at several ancient sites, including ancient Rome, their use did not become widespread until modern times.

1817 A major epidemic of cholera hit Calcutta, India, after a national festival. The numbers are not very accurate, however it was estimated that there were at least 10,000 fatalities. The epidemic then spread to other counties and to the U.S. and Canada by 1832. The governor of New York quarantined the Canadian border in a vain effort to stop the epidemic. When cholera reached New York City, people were so frightened they either fled or stayed inside, leaving the city streets deserted.

1854 A London, England, physician, Dr. John Snow, demonstrated that cholera deaths in an area of the city could all be traced to a common well that was contaminated, within the area of the city, with sewage.

1859 The British Parliament was suspended during the summer because of the stench coming from the Thames River. According to one account, the river began to “seethe and ferment under the burning sun.”

1892 The comma-shaped bacteria that causes cholera was identified by German scientist Robert Koch. His discovery proved the relationship between contaminated water and the disease.

1939 60 people died in an outbreak of typhoid fever at Manteno State Hospital in Illinois. The cause was traced to a sewer line passing too close to the hospital’s water supply.

1940 A valve was accidentally opened causing polluted water from the Genessee River to be pumped into the Rochester, NY, water supply. Approximately 35,000 cases of gastroenteritis and 6 cases of typhoid fever were reported.

1955 Water containing a large amount of sewage was blamed for overwhelming a water treatment plant and causing an epidemic of hepatitis in Delhi, India. An estimated 1 million people were infected.

1958 The Androscoggin River in Western Maine catches fire from chemicals discharged from a paper mill treatment facility.

1993 An outbreak of cryptosporidiosis in Milwaukee claimed 104 lives and infected more than 400,000 people.

This is the short list. Many will be quick to say that was caused by sewage; however this was NOT caused by properly TREATED sewage. So when the question arises, why so much . . . the answer is, we can’t afford not to. Remember that sooner or later, someone’s discharge becomes someone else’s intake.

NUFF said, see ya. 💧