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| Proposed etiology | Semmelweis's response |
| Miasma | Cannot account for the difference between the first and second clinics. |
| Atmospheric-cosmic-terrestrial | Allgemeines Krankenhaus maternity wards recoded higher mortality percentages than the rest of Vienna. Also, no major mortality change was observed with the change of seasons.  |
| Other epidemic etiologies | 1) Puerperal fever can be caused by trauma. 2) Years of intermissions that are often seen with epidemics are not seen here. |
| Extra strenuous state of the puerperae | Mortality among women delivering in the street is low.  |
| Puerperae specific disease  | Findings are identical to puerperal fever in autopsies of children (who contracted the disease from the mothers). |
| Disease develops due to fear  |

**Supplementary table 1.** Semmelweis's refutations of each of the common etiological explanation for puerperal fever2.