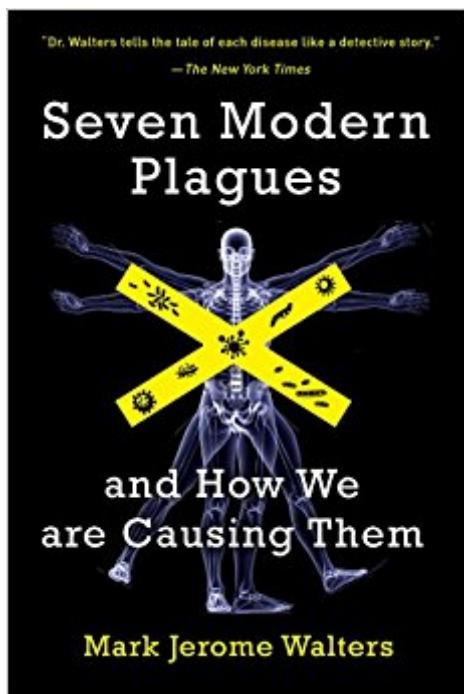


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# Seven Modern Plagues: And How We Are Causing Them



## Synopsis

Epidemiologists are braced for the big one: the strain of flu that rivals the pandemic of 1918-1919, which killed at least 20 million people worldwide. In recent years, we have experienced scares with a host of new influenza viruses: bird flu, swine flu, Spanish flu, Hong Kong flu, H5N1, and most recently, H5N7. While these diseases appear to emerge from thin air, in fact, human activity is driving them. And the problem is not just flu, but a series of rapidly evolving and dangerous modern plagues. According to veterinarian and journalist Mark Walters, we are contributing to-if not overtly causing-some of the scariest epidemics of our time. Through human stories and cutting-edge science, Walters explores the origins of seven diseases: mad cow disease, HIV/AIDS, Salmonella DT104, Lyme disease, hantavirus, West Nile, and new strains of flu. He shows that they originate from manipulation of the environment, from emitting carbon and clear-cutting forests to feeding naturally herbivorous cows "recycled animal protein." Since Walters first drew attention to these "ecodemics" in 2003 with the publication of *Six Modern Plagues*, much has been learned about how they developed. In this new, fully updated edition, the author presents research that precisely pinpoints the origins of HIV, confirms the link between forest fragmentation and increased risk of Lyme disease, and expands knowledge of the ecology of West Nile virus. He also explores developments in emerging diseases, including a new chapter on flu, examining the first influenza pandemic since the Hong Kong flu of 1968; a new tick-borne infection in the Mid-West; a second novel bird flu in China; and yet a new SARS-like virus in the Middle East. Readers will not only learn how these diseases emerged but the conditions that make future pandemics more likely. This knowledge is critical in order to prevent the next modern plague.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A fascinating work of ecological journalism, utterly convincing in its argument: that our health and the health of the environment are intimately linked, and we overlook that link at our peril." (Michael Pollan, author of "Second Nature" and "The Botany of Desire")"Refreshingly, this latest book explores the underlying shifts in human ecology and behavior that have potentiated recent epidemics." Walters achieves a balance between environmental science, clinical medicine, human interest, and social comment." (Nature)"Fascinating and readable ... [A] great introduction to the topic." (Library Journal)"Mark Jerome Walters weaves a fine thread of human disturbances through the quilt work of modern pandemics. After being drawn engagingly into the explosive symptoms of global environmental change, readers will come to understand that we have no choice but to make peace with nature." (Paul Epstein, M.D., Center for Health and the Global Environment, Harvard Medical School)"[Walters's] writing is excellent, light and in easy-to-read style, and the case history in each chapter is fascinating to read." (San Francisco Book Review)"Dr. Walters tells the tale of each disease like a detective story . . . . [The book] draws compelling, even disturbing, connections between disease and forces as implacable as population growth, deforestation, and modern lifestyles that consume fuel, meat, and acreage at an ever-growing pace." (New York Times)

An arresting account of emerging disease

Very informative regarding all the unfortunate decisions which have resulted in serious health issues. I can see why vegetarianism has grown in popularity.

this book is for my daughter.

some thought provoking content

We're going to hell in a handbasket that we're lowering ourselves while crying for someone to do something about it.

In the 50s and 60s, it appeared that we were entering a golden age of disease-free living. Vaccinations for the likes of polio and smallpox were on the way to essentially eliminating these scourges. Then just ten years later, we began to see new diseases. Today public health officials say they have more infectious diseases to deal with than they did 30 years ago. (And this says nothing of all the new autoimmune diseases.) Seven Modern Plagues follows them as they unfold, as health officials determine what they are, and detective work tells us how they came to be. The seven sisters are Mad Cow, HIV/AIDS, Salmonella, Lyme, Hantavirus, West Nile, and pandemic flu, with special mention for the up and coming Middle East Respiratory Syndrome. This is the second edition of this book. The first was called Six Modern Plagues. Clearly there is a lifelong franchise here. The villain, naturally, is us. By tampering with the feeding needs of cattle, by polluting the air, and travelling far and wide, we are constantly tempting the gods to strike back. And we keep begging for it. In 1970, the UK banned the use of antibiotics in cattle, leading to a huge reduction in the cases of salmonella, as resistant strains no longer held advantage over common strains. Meanwhile at the other extreme in the USA, Congress was encouraged to consider applying antibiotic treatments to children, to keep them disease free and encourage growth, just like in cattle and poultry. That's how far America is from standing up to the agribusiness lobby and banning it in farm animals. The result is antibiotic residue everywhere - in the water, on the ground, in everything we eat. So they become ineffective and diseases become antibiotic-proof. Seven Modern Plagues also explains how pigs figure into the flu disaster. Multiple pathogens can exist in the same cells in pigs. They mingle, share DNA, and the result is a spanking new flu virus they can share with both birds and people, every year. So this is never going to stop. Mice far more than deer are carriers of Lyme disease, and the new wet, warm climates have seen mouse populations not just increase but multiply. Same for the eternal mosquito: hot summers mean more of them, spreading farther, and distributing West Nile along the way. It is disheartening that we have so little control over ourselves and that our mismanagement has opened this Pandora's Box of pestilence. But shedding this kind of light on them and putting them in perspective, is clearly a valuable public service. David Wineberg

This book looks at seven different outbreaks — beginning with BSE and ending with pandemic flu. It does a good job for the general reader in explaining something of the science, the social impact and the causes as we understand them, of these diseases. The author humanises the stories, showing the passion and commitment of the people working in the field, and most importantly, highlighting the devastating impact on some of the individuals who are infected. There

is also some surprisingly (for this kind of book) atmospheric writing about the natural world. What the book highlights time and again is the impact of human behaviour on disease. While we have good disease control measures in place after an outbreak, the political will isn't there to make the changes that might prevent them. In particular, climate change and intensive farming place us at risk of future outbreaks. This is a good introduction for anyone who wants to know more about the subject but feels daunted by more specialist science writing.\*I received a copy of this book from the publisher via Netgalley.

As humans we like to think that we're at the top of the food chain, no one messes with us! Well....this book proves otherwise. *Seven Modern Plagues: and How We Are Causing Them* gives an overview of the history and progression of, you guessed it, 7 epidemics throughout the world. This book covers HIV/AIDS, West Nile, mad cow disease and others. I like that this book looks over everything regarding the epidemics; from where the epidemic originated, who patient 0 was, the history of the disease/virus and how humans, the environment and animals transmitted the disease. However, this book only provides what I consider a brief overview of it all and lacks follow-through regarding what modern medicine or preventative measures are being put into play to prevent the spread of these diseases. All in all, this book gives a solid overview of the 7 modern plagues but fails to go into real depth about each. I received this book from NetGalley for an honest review.

I thought this would be a dry, lingo-laden book but I was surprised by the ease at which the information was presented to me. In fact, I was engrossed by way the author presented the history of the "plagues" and the human side of the story: sometimes the reason for outbreaks is really simple, that humans are simply taught to live like this. However, most of the time, it's greed which comes back to bite us. An especially memorable quote came from the first story, on Mad Cow's Disease: "Did we really think we could just rearrange the world in any way we pleased?" I was slightly disappointed that each section is too short in my opinion. I was hoping there could be more insights. However it is just as well: longer stories could back fire. Disclosure: Got this free on NetGalley in exchange for an honest review

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