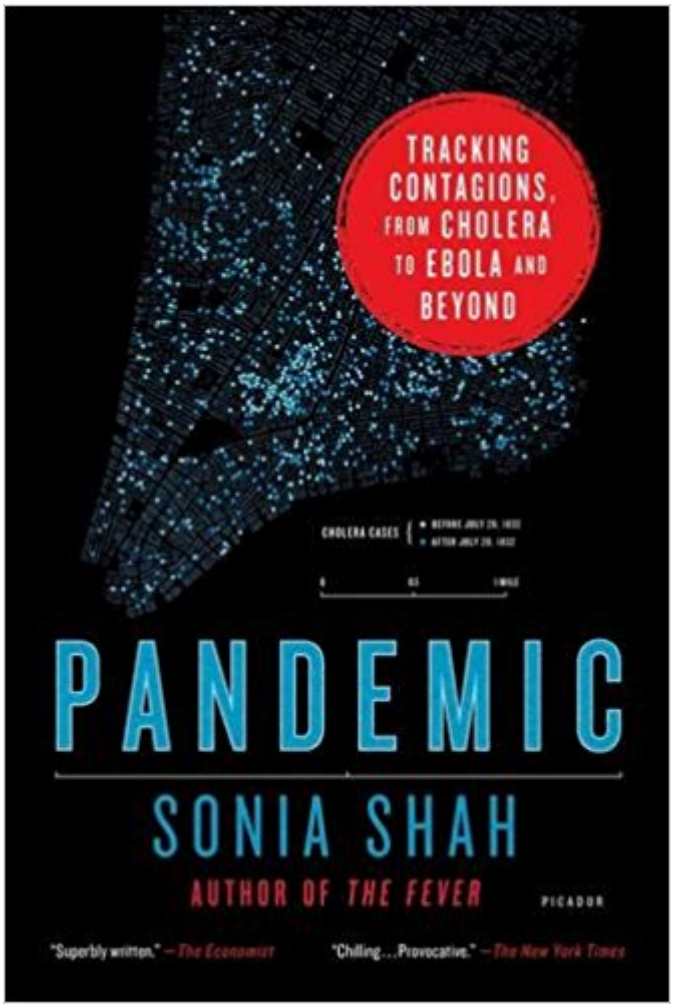
Pandemic: Tracking Contagions, From Cholera To Ebola And Beyond



Synopsis

A thrilling glimpse into the next likely global contagion---and how to stop it. Over the past fifty years, more than three hundred infectious diseases have emerged or reemerged in new territory. Experts around the world are bracing for a deadly, disruptive pandemic.In Pandemic: Tracking Contagions, from Cholera to Ebola and Beyond, prizewinning journalist Sonia Shah reveals how that could happen, by drawing parallels between cholera---one of historyâ ™s most deadly and disruptive pandemic-causing pathogens---and the new diseases that stalk us today. As Shah traces each stage of choleraâ ™s dramatic journey from harmless microbe to world-changing pandemic, she reports on the pathogens that have followed choleraâ ™s footsteps---from the MRSA bacterium that besieges her own family to the never-before-seen killers emerging from Chinaâ ™s wet markets, the surgical wards of New Delhi, the slums of Port-au-Prince, and the suburban backyards of the East Coast. A true story that is both gripping and alarming, Pandemic delves deep into the convoluted science, strange politics, and the checkered history of one of the worldâ ™s deadliest diseases, offering a prelude to the future thatâ ™s impossible to ignore.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Praise for Pandemic"Shah’s book should be required reading." â •The New York Review of Books"The worldâ ™s ability to put the lid on pandemics has come a long way since the days when the plague, cholera and smallpox ravaged unchecked. Ms Shahâ ™s book is a superbly written account of how we got here and what might await us." â •The Economist"[Shah] has succeeded in

producing a lively, rigorously researched and highly informative read." â •The Wall Street Journalâ œInvestigative science journalist Shah (The Fever, 2011) is at it again, and if the words, and beyond, in her latest bookâ ™s subtitle donâ ™t grab a readerâ ™s attention, they should . . . Yes, Shah is back and in rare form. And this time itâ ™s personal.â •â •Donna Chavez, Booklist (starred review)â œShrewdly articulated . . . thought-provoking and well-documentedâ • â •Nature Microbiologyâ œ[A] grounded, bracingly intelligent studyâ • â •Natureâ œShah proves a disquieting Virgil, guiding us through the hells ruled by [infectious diseases] . . . the power of Shah's account lies in her ability to track simultaneously the multiple dimensions of the public-health crises we are facing.â • â •The Chicago Tribuneâ œIn this absorbing, complex, and ominous look at the dangers posed by pathogens in our daily lives, science journalist Shah (The Fever) cautions that there are no easy solutions . . . Shahâ ™s warning is certainly troubling, and this important medical and social history is worthy of attentionâ •and action." â •Publishers WeeklyPraise for The Feverâ œAn often rollicking read . . . Shah has put together an engrossing cast of doctors, malariologists and historical figures.â • â •TIM MORRISON, Timeâ œSonia Shah â ™s tour-de-force history of malaria will convince you that the real sound track to our collective fate [is] the syncopated whine-slap, whine-slap of man and mosquito duking it out over the eons.â • â •ABIGAIL ZUGER , M . D ., The New York Timesâ œThis insightful book explores the human struggle with malaria not just from a scientific angle, which is cogently detailed without being overwhelming, but also from sociological and anthropological perspectives . . . Shah is to be commended.â • â •DENNIS ROSEN, The Boston Globeâ œThe lessons of history should give us pause . . . Many [issues] are brilliantly exposed in Ms. Shahâ ™s book .â • â • W. F . B YNUM, The Wall Street Journalâ œMeticulously researched and passionately written . . . One of this year â ™s most significant science books for the general reader.â • â •DAVID WALTON, The Plain Dealer (Cleveland)â œA fascinating history . . . Insightful, even revelatory.â • â •WENDY ORENT , The New Republic

Sonia Shah is a science journalist and prizewinning author. Her writing on science, politics, and human rights has appeared in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Foreign Affairs, Scientific American, and elsewhere, and she has been featured on Radiolab, Fresh Air, and TED.com, where her talk â œThree Reasons We Still Havenâ ™t Gotten Rid of Malariaâ • has been viewed by more than a million people around the world. Her 2010 book The Fever was long-listed for the Royal Societyâ ™s Winton Prize for Science Books.

I went in with a positive view on the book after hearing some good interviews with the author, but

found it a very disappointing read. I'm not an epidemiologist, but I was able to pick out some errors and sections that were pure conjecture (which she does not labeled as such). That makes me doubt the parts that sounded alright to me, but I don't know as much about.Ultimately, I left the book no better informed than I was when I started it.She does tell personal stories well, which probably explains why she gives such excellent interviews.

Yet another fear and loathing in the Big Pharma research world.She despises even the Gates Foundation for trying to eradicate malaria, '...they have no agenda that we know of...'Of course, climate change brought on by hydrocarbon use is the villain. As is modern life, capitalism, multi-national corporations and Big Pharma.How excruciatingly boring.Try The Next Pandemic or Contagion & Chaos.

While a book of this nature is timely and would be welcome, it must be a book where scientific accuracy is above reproach. I found a number of errors that make me call into question the remainder of the information. It was researched heavily, but still misinformation made it into the book.A note here before I continue. I am in upper management of a mosquito control district, so I am quite informed about mosquito disease issues that are problematic here in the United States. With that said, some issues with her research include her information on West Nile virus and dengue in Florida.Her discussion of West Nile virus early in the book is a mixture of fact and conjecture. No one is really sure how West Nile first got started in this country (in Queens, New York), but most experts believe that the most likely scenario was either mosquitoes that hitch hiked aboard commercial airline flights, cargo flights or it was introduced through the illegal trade in rare and exotic birds.The author makes the claim that the disease had probably been introduced by way of migratory birds along the Atlantic flyway. The big problem is that, while these birds do get together during the summer in the Arctic, their migration routes take them over New York as the mosquitoes that can transmit West Nile (Culex sps.) are heading into winter hibernation. In addition, the birds most susceptible to West Nile are not birds found along this flyway. Birds that summer in the Arctic are geese, ducks, etc. and they are very resistant to this virus. It is pretty uncommon to find the virus in their blood, and if it is, it is at a very low threshold. Crows and other corvids, which are heavily affected y the disease and are the reservoir for it don't winter there and commute south, making this an unlikely method of transmission.Her treatment of the dengue outbreak in South Florida is also riddled with inaccuracies. Yes, there were a number of abandoned pools in the housing meltdown at about the time of the dengue outbreak. And, swimming pools were allowed to

go "green", which means the water turns fetid. Her claim that they are out of sight of mosquito control experts is ludicrous, however. Most mosquito control districts use either images from satellites or aerial photography. The "green" pools stand out like a sore thumb and the districts can them treat them. In addition, neighbors tend to squeal when there is a large influx of mosquitoes.What makes this a particularly erroneous section, however, is that the species of mosquito that likes to breed in fetid water is the Culex sps., which can transmit West Nile disease and a number of other disease, but cannot transmit dengue. That requires the Aedes sps. which has been present in South Florida (and a lot of the rest of the country) for years. That particular type mosquito hates fetid water and likes to breed in containers, tires and other places where clean rainwater collects. In a roundabout way, the foreclosure crisis may have been to partially to blame, but not because of the swimming pools, but rather because people being evicted tend to leave junk on the property, such as tires, old pots and containers.The dengue outbreak was likely caused by a lot of factors, including weather, but also by the arrival of infected people into the South Florida region. Dengue is endemic in numerous Caribbean islands, as well as most of Central and South America. If visitors to the country that were infected with dengue came in the right numbers, the disease would flourish.Finally, she chastises the scientific community for not searching for new diseases more quickly. And while that may sound valid, remember that there are thousands, if not millions, of diseases living in animals around the world that have not spread to humans. The majority of time spent looking for new diseases in a given area is spent looking for diseases known to be transmitted to man and to cause death and disablement A good example would be the Zika virus now making the news. This was first identified decades ago in Africa, but it never caused any harm to humans, so it was ignored. It was only when it started to appear in South America that humans became seriously impacted. Now it is on the watch list and testing is being done to locate it.Overall, I think she tried to write a valid book, but entered into areas where she had no expertise and failed to consult specialists in those fields. It is one thing to read papers on disease, but another to talk to someone who works with it day in and day out. An expert can give you the consesnus science pretty quickly, but you need to read a lot of different papers to find a good mix of information.My recommendation would be to pass this over. There are other, better books out there, and given the problems found by me and others with expertise, it makes me question all of the science in the book..

In the medical profession we constantly admit (often unknowingly) the next ’bad’ critter into our population. This writer gives a tremendously easy understanding of the How and Why and possible

Where, leaving us to ponder When.

I endured this book to page 77 when I decided the author did not have credibility. There were many little things that seemed to have been exagerated or just made up. In writing about the terriblly unsanitary water of New York in the early years prior to its Chlorea epidemic she described water samples as being 'semisolid' due to the fecal contamination with 8000 mg of solid material in a gallon of water. 8000 mg is less than the weight of 2 nickels - an amount that would not even be visible. There were other descriptions about human and fecal contamination that were made to sound beyond horrible but when she described Ireland going into their potato famine that caused untold numbers of tenant farmers to starve to death, she said the average consumption of potatoes was 10 pounds per day - being mostly starch (caarbohydrates) that comes to about 20 thousand calories - highly improbable. I didn't see much evidence of true research and the book was greatly lacking in credibility. I purchased the book based on the title with no research - my mistake.