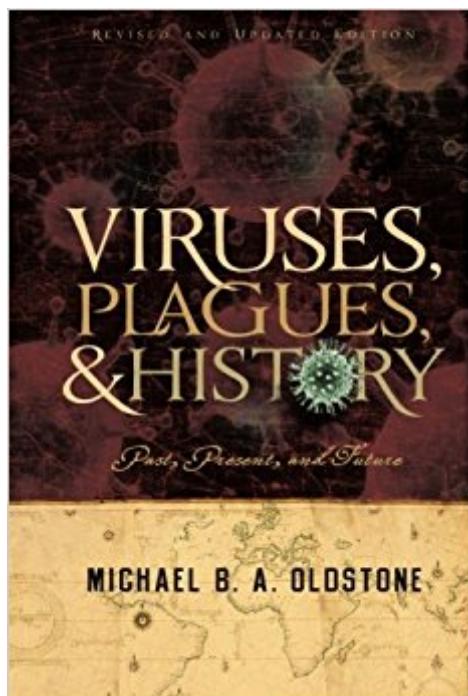


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# Viruses, Plagues, And History: Past, Present And Future



## Synopsis

The story of viruses and humanity is a story of fear and ignorance, of grief and heartbreak, and of great bravery and sacrifice. Michael Oldstone tells all these stories as he illuminates the history of the devastating diseases that have tormented humanity, focusing mostly on the most famous viruses. Oldstone begins with smallpox, polio, and measles. Nearly 300 million people were killed by smallpox in this century alone and the author presents a vivid account of the long campaign to eradicate this lethal killer. Oldstone then describes the fascinating viruses that have captured headlines in more recent years: Ebola, Hantavirus, mad cow disease (a frightening illness made worse by government mishandling and secrecy), and, of course, AIDS. And he tells us of the many scientists watching and waiting even now for the next great plague, monitoring influenza strains to see whether the deadly variant from 1918--a viral strain that killed over 20 million people in 1918-1919--will make a comeback. For this revised edition, Oldstone includes discussions of new viruses like SARS, bird flu, virally caused cancers, chronic wasting disease, and West Nile, and fully updates the original text with new findings on particular viruses. *Viruses, Plagues, and History* paints a sweeping portrait of humanity's long-standing conflict with our unseen viral enemies. Oldstone's book is a vivid history of a fascinating field, and a highly reliable dispatch from an eminent researcher on the front line of this ongoing campaign.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Readable books about viruses by experts are not plentiful enough, and the point of this essay is to

recommend a recent arrival by the American virologist Michael Oldstone. In 17 chapters, the author gives the non-specialist reader a complete account of viruses and virus-caused plagues such as smallpox, yellow fever, measles, polio, hemorrhagic fever, Lassa fever, ebola, hantavirus, SARS, West Nile Virus, mad cow disease, and influenza...Read this book (available now)--it's a treat."

--Dan Agin, Huffington Post "...marvelously clear to lay readers, yet detailed enough to please and fascinate the professional."--Doody's

Michael B. A. Oldstone is Professor and Head of the Viral-Immunobiology Laboratory at The Scripps Research Institute. A leader in the field, he has been the recipient of numerous awards and honors and has served or serves on several national and international committees charged with understanding, treating and eliminating viral diseases. He was a consultant to the World Health Organization for the eradication of poliomyelitis and measles, and was a member of the SAGE Executive Board. He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences.

Michael Oldstone covers the material very well. As a virologist, I found it interesting and enlightening and I learned some things that I didn't pick up in my immunology courses. Parts of the book are at a college reading level, which may be too detailed for the casual reader, but the sections on the history of various viral diseases is very readable.

I have read several books on contagious diseases and Dr. Oldstone does an excellent job of presenting the diseases & the history behind each one. Although much of the information I already knew, Dr. Oldstone did present some new information which is why I like reading books of the same topic from different authors.

Interesting read.

This second edition is a fascinating view of history based on the powerful influence of plagues and viruses, not human politics. It also details the investigative work of pioneers in biology in discovering agents we take for granted today. In light of ebola (and possibly other future epidemics/pandemics), the book offers insight into containment and management. Overall, an exciting reading experience.

not perfect but a good try. author is little bit like McNeil and Crosby but i still applaud his attempt at a global history that includes the medical and social perspectives

Aside from a few editorial errors (calling Lincoln the 12th President in a historical anecdote and some repetition) this is a very informative read about the history and future of viral diseases. Our tentative successes are weighed with the potential for future epidemics quite well. Every person who works in the public sectors of America should educate themselves about the possibility of future plagues and this book is a good place to start.

A bit dry, academic, and long on detail at the expense of narrative. Might be better for a professional or med student. A more casual reader might try Quammen's *Spillover* but if you want depth, this would get the job done.

An eye-opening review of the impact of viruses on world history. An interesting read that will be appreciated by the layman and medical professional. It will provide a little continuing education for those in any medical field.

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