



Pandemic: Tracking Contagions, from Cholera to Ebola and Beyond

By Sonia Shah

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Pandemic: Tracking Contagions, from Cholera to Ebola and Beyond By Sonia Shah

Scientists agree that a pathogen is likely to cause a global pandemic in the near future. But which one? And how?

Over the past fifty years, more than three hundred infectious diseases have either newly emerged or reemerged, appearing in territories where they've never been seen before. Ninety percent of epidemiologists expect that one of them will cause a deadly pandemic sometime in the next two generations. It could be Ebola, avian flu, a drug-resistant superbug, or something completely new. While we can't know which pathogen will cause the next pandemic, by unraveling the story of how pathogens have caused pandemics in the past, we can make predictions about the future. In *Pandemic: Tracking Contagions, from Cholera to Ebola and Beyond*, the prizewinning journalist Sonia Shah—whose book on malaria, *The Fever*, was called a “tour-de-force history” (*The New York Times*) and “revelatory” (*The New Republic*)—interweaves history, original reportage, and personal narrative to explore the origins of contagions, drawing parallels between cholera, one of history's most deadly and disruptive pandemic-causing pathogens, and the new diseases that stalk humankind today.

To reveal how a new pandemic might develop, Sonia Shah tracks each stage of cholera's dramatic journey, from its emergence in the South Asian hinterlands as a harmless microbe to its rapid dispersal across the nineteenth-century world, all the way to its latest beachhead in Haiti. Along the way she reports on the pathogens now following in cholera's footsteps, from the MRSA bacterium that besieges her own family to the never-before-seen killers coming out of China's wet markets, the surgical wards of New Delhi, and the suburban backyards of the East Coast.

By delving into the convoluted science, strange politics, and checkered history of one of the world's deadliest diseases, *Pandemic* reveals what the next global contagion might look like and what we can do to prevent it.

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for *Pandemic*

"Shah's book should be required reading." ?*The New York Review of Books*

"The world'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 Shah's book is a superbly written account of how we got here and what might await us." ?*The Economist*

"[Shah] has succeeded in producing a lively, rigorously researched and highly informative read." ?*The Wall Street Journal*

"Investigative science journalist Shah (*The Fever*, 2011) is at it again, and if the words, *and beyond*, in her latest book's subtitle don't grab a reader's attention, they should . . . Yes, Shah is back and in rare form. And this time it's personal." ?Donna Chavez, *Booklist* (starred review)

"Shrewdly articulated . . . thought-provoking and well-documented" ?*Nature Microbiology*

"[A] grounded, bracingly intelligent study" ?*Nature*

"Shah 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." ?*The Chicago Tribune*

"In 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 . . . Shah's warning is certainly troubling, and this important medical and social history is worthy of attention and action." ?*Publishers Weekly*

Praise for *The Fever*

"An often rollicking read . . . Shah has put together an engrossing cast of doctors, malariologists and historical figures." ?TIM MORRISON, *Time*

"Sonia Shah'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." ?ABIGAIL ZUGER, M. D., *The New York Times*

"This 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." ?DENNIS ROSEN, *The Boston Globe*

"The lessons of history should give us pause . . . Many [issues] are brilliantly exposed in Ms. Shah's book ." ?W. F. B YNUM, *The Wall Street Journal*

“Meticulously researched and passionately written . . . One of this year ’s most significant science books for the general reader.” ?DAVID WALTON, *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland)

“A fascinating history . . . Insightful, even revelatory.” ?WENDY ORENT , *The New Republic*

About the Author

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 “Three Reasons We Still Haven’t Gotten Rid of Malaria” has been viewed by more than a million people around the world. Her 2010 book *The Fever* was long-listed for the Royal Society’s Winton Prize for Science Books.

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