



# American Plagues: Lessons from Our Battles with Disease

*Stephen H. Gehlbach*

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Smallpox, yellow fever, malaria, and polio, fearful diseases that once beset Americans, are now largely, just unhappy history. Yet from our confrontations with these past plagues come lessons that inform today's struggles to understand and remedy problems like HIV/AIDS, coronary heart disease, and Ebola infection. *American Plagues* weaves stories of encounters with epidemics over our history with lessons that aid our present understanding of health and disease.

Doctors and clergy, writers and newsmen, public health institutions, and even an entire town relate their personal experiences with various outbreaks and the ways they were identified, contained, and treated. The stories are filled with ambition and accomplishment, jealousy and disappointment, public spirit and self-interest, egotism and modesty. Some episodes lead to vital discoveries. Others were unproductive. Yet each proved instructive and expanded our abilities to gather and process information in ways that improve medicine and public health today.

*American Plagues* gives readers insights into some of the people and events that make up our rich public health history as well as skills to better grasp the complex health information that cascades upon us from the media.

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