

Recommendations of new books on the pandemic

Karl Heinz Roth, a medical doctor and historian, shows how deeply the global pandemic is affecting our societies and people's everyday lives – a fundamental work for critically coming to terms with this crisis, and for avoiding future ones. For the past two years, the pandemic triggered by the SARS-CoV-2 virus has domi-

nated the world. It has permeated people's everyday lives, changed social relationships, dominated the media, challenged the political establishment and put numerous scientific disciplines to the test. Roth presents the event from a global perspective, recounts the prehistory dating back to the 2000s, analyses the spread and dy-

namics of Covid-19, and discusses the pandemic's characteristics and impact on humans. It addresses the countermeasures, the failures revealed in the process, and the mental, political, social, and economic consequences of the lockdowns. For the first time, this book considers, relates, and contextualizes the individual aspects of a global pandemic across disciplines, allowing for discussion and resolution of contentious issues such as the virus as a laboratory escapee, the role of major international foundations, and the effects and collateral damage.

Roth, Karl H. (2022): Blinde Passagiere. Die Corona-Krise und ihre Folgen. München: Antje Kunstmann Verlag (engl. translation: Stowaways. The Corona crises and its consequences). 480 pages. ISBN 978-3-95614-497-4. Price: €30.00.

For all its horror, the history of epidemics is a story of success and progress, and not only in medical terms. We owe our current life expectancy not least to the experience gained with pandemics.

Many epidemics even made great history – for better or worse. While measles made an inglorious name for itself as an invisible supporter in the conquest of the New World, vaccinations were used against smallpox for the first time, and repeated cholera outbreaks led to improved hygiene concepts taking hold in cities. In the Spanish flu of 1918, on the other hand, most countries largely failed to protect people.

Many individual aspects of the epidemic story are all too familiar to us today: from conspiracy theories and rapid protective measures to lockdown and vaccination opponents, to courageous and self-sacrificing efforts on behalf of the sick and others who suffered, and the ability to stand together as a society and defy the challenge.

Gutberlet, Bernd I. (2021): Heimsuchung. Seuchen und Pandemien: Vom Schrecken zum Fortschritt. (engl. translation: Visitation. Epidemics and pandemics: From horror to progress). München: Europa Verlag. 432 pages. ISBN 978-3958904262. Price: €24.00.

In this Very Short Introduction, eminent biologist and popular science writer Dorothy Crawford offers a fascinating portrait of viruses even before Corona came around. Crawford first relates how viruses are being discovered and she unravels the intricate structures of tiny parasites that are by far the most abundant life forms on the planet. Analysing the threat of viral infections, Crawford recounts stories of renowned killer viruses such as Ebola and rabies as well as the less known bat-borne Nipah and Hendra viruses. She identifies wild animals as the source of the most recent pandemics, detailing the reasons behind the present increase in potentially fatal infections, and evaluating the evidence that suggests that long term viruses can eventually lead to cancer.

Crawford, Dorothy H. (2018): Viruses: A Very Short Introduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 176 pages. ISBN 978-0198811718. Price: €16.97.

The Covid-19 pandemic has left a trail of loss, misery, and economic ruin in its wake. With such destruction, can there be any silver lining? As veteran science journalist Debora MacKenzie illuminates in this captivating, acclaimed book, there is one: with the lessons learned from this disaster, we can stop it from happening again. She lays out the full picture; of the previous viruses that should have prepared us, the shocking public health failures that led to this catastrophe, the wrong decisions made at every turn. And employing what we have learned about viruses, vaccines, inequality, global cooperation, and more, she charts a bold, optimistic path forward for protecting humanity from threats to come. There is no question that more viruses are on the way, and we are still unprepared. But if we learn from our mistakes and heed the vision MacKenzie lays out in this book, we might avoid going through a nightmare like this ever again.

MacKenzie, Debora (2021): Stopping the Next Pandemic: How Covid-19 Can Help Us Save Humanity. New York: Hachette Books. 384 pages. ISBN 978-0306924224. Price: €24.07.

This sweeping exploration of the impact of epidemic diseases looks at how mass infectious outbreaks have shaped society, from the Black Death to today, and in a new preface addresses the global threat of COVID-19. In a clear and accessible style, Frank M. Snowden reveals the ways that diseases have not only influenced medical science and public health but also transformed the arts, religion, intellectual history, and warfare.

A multidisciplinary and comparative investigation of the medical and social history of the major epidemics, this volume touches on themes such as the evolution of medical therapy, plague literature, poverty, the environment, and mass hysteria. In addition to providing a historical perspective on diseases such as smallpox, cholera, and tuberculosis, Snowden examines the fallout from recent epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, SARS, and Ebola and the question of the world's preparedness for the next generation of diseases.

Snowden, Frank M. (2019): Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present. New Haven: Yale University Press. 582 pages. ISBN 978-0300256390. Price: €21.22.

The Corona pandemic and the federal government's response to it in terms of infection control policy have spawned a new movement: the "Querdenker". Little is known about the social composition, media use behaviour, and knowledge practices of this group. For the first time, an interdisciplinary group of social scientists has comprehensively studied these protests to understand why the movement emerged, what moves it, and how it operates. The book comprehensively covers the various protest groups, from the economically affected to vaccination opponents and esotericists to conspiracy theorists and radical right-wing protesters.

Lindenberger, Thomas / Reichardt, Sven (2021): Die Misstrauensgesellschaft der "Querdenker". Die Corona-Proteste aus kultur- und sozialwissenschaftlicher Perspektive. (engl. translation: The distrust society of the "contrarians". The Corona protests from a cultural and social science perspective). Frankfurt : Campus Publisher. 323 pages. ISBN 9783593514581. Price: €29.95.

Second only to the human brain in its complexity, it is one of the oldest and most critical facets of life on Earth. Without it, you would die within days. In *Immune*, Philipp Dettmer, the brains behind the most popular science channel on YouTube, takes readers on a journey through the fortress of the human body and its defences. There is a constant battle of staggering scale raging within us, full of stories of invasion, strategy, defeat, and noble self-sacrifice. In fact, in the time you've been reading this, your immune system has probably identified and eradicated a cancer cell that started to grow in your body.

Dettmer, Phillip (2021): Immune – a journey into the mysterious system that keeps you alive. New York: Random House. 368 pages. ISBN 978-0593241318 (hardback). Price: €22.99.

Quarantine is our most powerful response to uncertainty: it means waiting to see if something hidden inside us will be revealed. It is also one of our most dangerous, operating through an assumption of guilt. In quarantine, we are considered infectious until proven safe. *Until Proven Safe* tracks the history and future of quarantine around the globe, chasing the story of emergency isolation through time and space – from the crumbling lazarettos of the Mediterranean, built to contain the Black Death, to an experimental Ebola unit in London, and from the hallways of the Centre of Disease Control (USA) to closed-door simulations where pharmaceutical execs and epidemiologists prepare for the outbreak of a novel coronavirus. But the story of quarantine ranges far beyond the history of medical isolation. In *Until Proven Safe*, the authors tour a nuclear-waste isolation facility beneath the New Mexican desert, see plants stricken with a disease that threatens the world's wheat supply, and meet NASA's Planetary Protection Officer, tasked with saving Earth from extra-terrestrial infections. They also introduce us to the corporate tech giants hoping to revolutionize quarantine through surveillance and algorithmic prediction.

Managh, Geoff and Twilley, Nicola (2021): Until Proven Safe. The History and Future of Quarantine. New York: MCD. 396 pages. ISBN-13978-0374126582 (hardback). Price: €23.60.

With lessons learned from COVID-19, a world-leading expert on pandemic preparedness proposes a pragmatic plan urgently needed for the future of global health security. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed how unprepared the world was for such an event, as even the most sophisticated public health systems failed to cope. We must have far more investment and preparation, along with better detection, warning, and coordination within and across national boundaries. In an age of global pandemics, no country can achieve public health on its own. Health security planning is paramount. Lawrence O. Gostin has spent three decades designing resilient health systems and governance that take account of our interconnected world, as a close advisor to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), and many public health agencies globally. *Global Health Security* addresses the borderless dangers societies now face, including infectious diseases and bioterrorism, and examines the political, environmental, and socioeconomic factors exacerbating these threats. Weak governance, ineffective health systems, and lack of preparedness are key sources of risk, and all of them came to the fore during the COVID-19 crisis, even – sometimes especially – in wealthy countries like the United States.

Gostin, Lawrence O. (2021): Global Health Security. A Blueprint for the Future. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. 331 pages. ISBN 978-0674976610 (hardback). Price: €40.94.