



The Origins of AIDS

By Jacques Pepin

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It is now thirty years since the discovery of AIDS but its origins continue to puzzle doctors and scientists. Inspired by his own experiences working as an infectious diseases physician in Africa, Jacques Pepin looks back to the early twentieth-century events in Africa that triggered the emergence of HIV/AIDS and traces its subsequent development into the most dramatic and destructive epidemic of modern times. He shows how the disease was first transmitted from chimpanzees to man and then how urbanization, prostitution, and large-scale colonial medical campaigns intended to eradicate tropical diseases combined to disastrous effect to fuel the spread of the virus from its origins in Léopoldville to the rest of Africa, the Caribbean and ultimately worldwide. This is an essential new perspective on HIV/AIDS and on the lessons that must be learnt if we are to avoid provoking another pandemic in the future.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Despite the scientific advances made since the discovery of HIV, questions of the pandemic's origin still trouble us. Why us? Why now? How could this happen? Pepin's remarkable book provides, at last, a comprehensive answer. Three decades of scientific and historical research are distilled into an engaging, highly readable, and sometimes disturbing account of HIV's journey that will interest students and researchers of the virus and its fallible host." Oliver G Pybus, Department of Zoology, University of Oxford

"In this scholarly and immensely readable account of the origin of AIDS, Dr Pepin draws on his personal experience of working in central Africa and his extensive knowledge of African history, as well as his training in infectious diseases, virology and epidemiology. Unlike others who have tackled the subject, he comes to it with an open mind, and this account is likely to be definitive." David Mabey, Professor of Communicable Diseases, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

"This first major re-assessment of the origin of AIDS since Hooper's *The River*, delves into the extensive archives on the AIDS epidemic. Weaving together the findings of many researchers currently working on the topic, it will undoubtedly stimulate discussion on a subject of great concern and interest: the historical record of the emergence of new viruses." -William H. Schneider, Professor of History, Indiana University

"The origin and early epidemiology of the Human Immunodeficiency Viruses (HIV) has been perplexing and controversial. Jacques Pepin provides a unique insight as an investigator who has spent years in several African countries and has contributed substantially to our knowledge of routes of transmission. We must learn from this history if we wish to avoid future pandemics." -Allan Ronald, Professor Emeritus, University of Manitoba

"A great book on the evolutionary origin of HIV and the possible role of cultural and medical practices in Central Africa in the dissemination of the virus" -Max Essex, Lasker Professor at Harvard University and author of "Saturdays are for Funerals"

"Extensively referenced, the well-written book reads like a detective story, while at the same time providing a didactic introduction to epidemiology and evolutionary genetics. As far as the origins of AIDS are concerned, unless some completely new evidence emerges, it will be difficult to come up with a better explanation than Pepin's." -Science

"This is a beautifully written book, which explains epidemiological and scientific concepts such as phylogenetic analysis in clear and simple language. Pepin has assembled a vast amount of information from a wide variety of sources, and paints a clear, coherent and convincing account of the origins of AIDS. This book is required reading for anyone with a serious interest in infectious diseases." -David Mabey, Sexually Transmitted Infections

"Superb ... Pépin rightly argues that, apart from social factors promoting HIV spread, inherent properties of the virus must determine its fitness to become pandemic. He also provides the best analysis I have read of the declining HIV-2 epidemic in West Africa." -Nature

"An impressive feat of scientific scholarship ... absorbing throughout, interweaving quantitative data with historical narrative and lively biographies." -The Lancet

"This book is an excellent, fair-minded attempt to elucidate a much-contested story.' -Literary Review

"Pepin's achievement is formidable. He has mastered a vast technical literature in French and English, exploited the archives and material remains of colonial and postcolonial Africa, and knows his African history to boot. He writes with grace and feeling, and makes accessible the scientific and clinical issues. Above all, he comes across as a humane and caring doctor. This is a major contribution to our understanding of the scourge that has defined our times." -TLS

"The superb organization of the book is noteworthy; the reader is never left hanging, and the path to the next topic is always clear. Highly recommended." -Choice

"Pepin has written an absorbing analysis of the roots of the epidemic." -Nicolas van de Walle, Foreign Affairs

"The language of Pepin's book is academic, yet easily accessible to a lay, educated readership. Graphics, charts and maps emphasize the text content. The Origins of AIDS offers, for the first time, an in-depth look into the pandemic prior to 1981 and, with that, the missing pieces that complete the story of AIDS." -Alina Oswald, A&U, America's AIDS magazine

About the Author

Jacques Pepin is Professor and Head of the Infectious Diseases Division, Department of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases at the University of Sherbrooke, Canada, where he is also Director of the Centre for International Health. He has conducted research on infectious diseases in sixteen African countries.

Users Review

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