



(Photo: European Commission DG ECHO/Flickr)

The Scariest Virus: Ebola Is Back, and It's Worse Than Ever

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You've seen Ebola and other viral hemorrhagic fevers depicted on screens both large and small, but what health care workers are currently fighting in West Africa is worse than anything writers have dreamed up.

hyperbolic

At least you acknowledge fiction? good start?

In sixth grade, I molded a human hand out of clay and then used acrylic paints to map the course of radiation poisoning. When a seventh-grade science teacher told us to create models of animal cells, mine had to be three-dimensional. I bought a fishbowl and some clear Jell-O. Over the course of an afternoon and night, I tiptoed into the kitchen every hour or two to pour a thin layer of gelatin onto my legume and pasta organelles.

irrelevant

opinion, not fact

By eighth grade, I had moved on to viruses, becoming fascinated with the least-understood and most terrifying group known to man: viral hemorrhagic fevers, the genre that claims yellow fever, dengue fever, and the Marburg and Ebola viruses. I learned that Ebola isn't a scary virus—it's *the* scary virus. Yellow fever may have wiped out more than (<http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/contagion/yellowfever.html>) 10 percent (<http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/contagion/yellowfever.html>) of Philadelphia's population in 1793, but that stunning death toll is nothing compared to the devastation that Marburg and Ebola wreak. They're our epidemiological boogymen.

How does this math even work?

What Ebola does to the human body defies reason. It's like something out of a horror movie, not a textbook. A la *Andromeda Strain*, we know very little about where this virus comes from (<http://news.discovery.com/animals/ebolas-deadly-jump-from-animal-to-animal-140730.htm>), just that the most likely "ground zero" is the fruit bat. These bats serve as natural reservoirs, occasionally infecting other animals—from primates to antelopes, porcupines, rodents, dogs, and pigs. Most strains that can infect humans are extremely contagious and exceedingly lethal, with fatality rates between 60 and 90 percent.

+ of people infected; # meaningless w/o that + pop levels

IN 1994, RICHARD PRESTON, the *New Yorker* contributor who has written a number of books about infectious disease, commented, "Ebola does in 10 days what it takes AIDS 10 years to accomplish."

see

At the least, this is the most virulent and efficient strain of Ebola we've ever seen. At worst, we're witnessing the onset of a deadly mutation anticipated and feared for almost four decades.

unsubstantiated

wrong

False

Two hundred and eighty of the 318 people who contracted the virus died during the first known Ebola outbreak (<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/resources/outbreak-table.html>) in what's now the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1976. That's an 88 percent fatality rate. The same year, a less virulent strain appeared in Sudan: 284 infected, 151 dead. It was 20 years before the next outbreak: In 1995, Ebola infected 315 and killed 250—a 79 percent fatality rate. From 1995 to 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recorded a series of distinct Ebola epidemics in Gabon and the D.R.C. claiming 621 lives, their fatality rates roughly between 50 and 90 percent.

* see: virologydownunder.blogspot.com/au @ Mackay FM

By what definition of worse? The one with less than normal deaths for Zaire strain?

At the time this was published, CFR was ~55%*

thought you want using fiction?

where it comes from