



Cholera: The Biography (Biographies of Diseases)

Christopher Hamlin

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Cholera is a frightening disease. Victims are wracked by stomach cramps and suffer intense diarrhoea. Death can come within hours.

Though now seeming a distant memory in Europe, which suffered several epidemics in the 19th century before John Snow identified the link with water, cholera is still a serious threat in many parts of the world--Zimbabwe is a recent example. Snow's discovery was one of the great breakthroughs of epidemiology and a wonderful story from the history of science. Later came the discovery of the culprit organism--Cholera vibrio--understanding of its life cycle, and the development of a vaccine. But the problem of cholera has not disappeared. This book tells the story of cholera, and looks at both the medical success in the West, and the different attitudes to the disease in countries in which it is prevalent as opposed to those in which it put in a temporary appearance. Unlike other books on cholera, which focus on the experience of particular countries, Christopher Hamlin's account draws together the experiences from various countries, both those that were colonies and those that were not.

Cholera: the biography is part of the Oxford series, *Biographies of Diseases*, edited by William and Helen Bynum. In each individual volume an expert historian or clinician tells the story of a particular disease or condition throughout history - not only in terms of growing medical understanding of its nature and cure, but also shifting social and cultural attitudes, and changes in the meaning of the name of the disease itself.

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