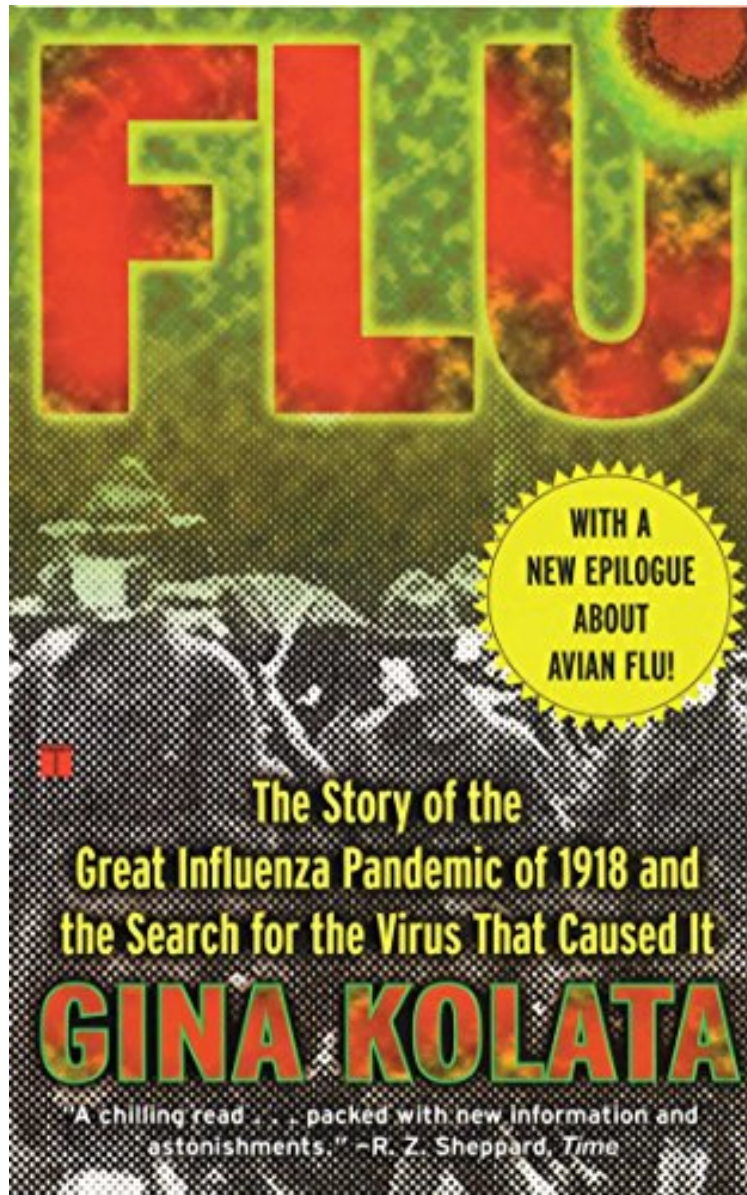


(Ebook pdf) Flu: The Story Of The Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus that Caused It

# Flu: The Story Of The Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus that Caused It

Gina Kolata

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**Gina Kolata : Flu: The Story Of The Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus that Caused It** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Flu: The Story Of The Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus that Caused It:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Flu: an excellent book which explains how viruses make the leap from animals to humans, and mutate.....By gilly8An excellent and highly readable (not dry) book. It covers the history of the 1918-1920 influenza outbreak that caused a worldwide pandemic....It then goes to modern times, and the research that was done into HOW the flu made the leap from an animal (in this case, pigs) to humans. Recruits for the U.S. army, at a base near a pig farm, were the first people ever effected: they then carried it with them to Europe, to the trenches of World War I, where it spread, and then when the war ended, the troops from each different country carried it home to their countries where it continued to spread. It then caused a world wide pandemic, with millions of deaths.....not just of the very young and very old, which is what is "normal" in most diseases, but the young, healthy, men and women of working and parenting age were the ones most often affected.Eventually it was found in every nation in the world, even among still traditional tribal peoples, who had little or no contact with the "outside world".....entire villages of the Inuit (often called Eskimos) were wiped out.This is relevant to us today because of the risk of Avian Flu, and others.....viruses DO make the mutation and the leap from an animal vector to humans.....we've seen it in Ebola, in HIV, and many other viruses, but for a long time this was not recognized. Now, it is an accepted fact.Excellent book, quick read, factual but not dry at all...I highly recommend it.5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. An interesting but unfinished storyBy C. EbelingThe scientist reader probably greets Gia Kolata's lucid book Flu with,"been there, know that," but the rest of us can get some mileage out of it. Kolata takes the 1918 flu pandemic and plays it out as a real-life murder mystery, dishing out explanations of virology as well as cultural and historical notes as she follows a variety of characters chase after the solution. The 1918 pandemic was lethal, cutting a swath across the population, killing more robust young American adults in one year than were killed in all the major wars of the 20th century combined. When it was done, the flu disappeared as quickly as it came and for reasons that are not fully explored in the book, America relegated the experience to obscurity. No one knew what strain it was or how to vaccinate against it in the future. Occasionally, in ensuing decades, a scientist would reconsider the mystery, but it wasn't until a few years ago that two teams simultaneously scrambled for body tissue of 1918 victims buried in the permafrost of Alaska and Norway, and a solution was in sight. The very expensive, media-attended Norwegian attempt was unsuccessful while the Alaskan trek, funded out of pocket, was in, out and got the goods very quietly.And there, suddenly, Kolata stops. It's like pulling the keys out of the ignition of a car that's plummeting across Interstate 80. Up to this point, the book is very interesting and I feel a little cheated out of the climax. That aside, I learned from this very readable book, especially how my own misconceptions about flu vaccinations (I have avoided them) were shaped by the political and media bumbling surrounding the 1976 swine flu epidemic. I also understand the science of virology better. Kolata is not one of the players but her prose transcends technical writing and conveys the thrill of the hunt.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I learned so much.By C. MartinelliLearned so much from this well written book regarding this terrible pandemic.

A national bestseller, the fast-paced and gripping account of the Great Flu Epidemic of 1918 from acclaimed science journalist Gina Kolata, now featuring a new epilogue about avian flu.When we think of plagues, we think of AIDS, Ebola, anthrax spores, and, of course, the Black Death. But in 1918 the Great Flu Epidemic killed an estimated forty million people virtually overnight. If such a plague returned today, taking a comparable percentage of the US population with it, 1.5 million Americans would die. In Flu, Gina Kolata, an acclaimed reporter for The New York Times, unravels the mystery of this lethal virus with the high drama of a great adventure story. From Alaska to Norway, from the streets of Hong Kong to the corridors of the White House, Kolata tracks the race to recover the live pathogen and probes the fear that has impelled government policy. A gripping work of science writing, Flu addresses the prospects for a great epidemics recurrence and considers what can be done to prevent it.

.com Feeling tired, achy, and congested? You'll hope not after reading science writer Gina Kolata's engrossing Flu, a fascinating look at the 1918 epidemic that wiped out around 40 million people in less than a year and afflicted more than one of every four Americans. This tragedy, just on the heels of World War I and far more deadly, so traumatized the survivors that few would talk about it afterward. Kolata reports on the scientific investigation of this bizarre outbreak, in particular the attempts to sequence the virus' DNA from tissue samples of victims. She also looks at the social and personal effects of the disease, from improved public health awareness to the loss of productivity. (The disease affected 20- to 40-year-olds disproportionately.) How could this disease, now almost trivial to healthy young people, have become so virulent? The answer is complex, invoking epidemiology, immunology, and even psychology, but Kolata cuts a swath through medical papers and statistical reports to tell a story of an out-of-control virus exploiting an exhausted world on the brink of transition into modern society. Through letters, interviews, and news reports, she pieces together a cautionary tale that captures the horror of a devastating illness. Research marches onward, but we're still at the mercy of something as simple as the flu. --Rob LightnerFrom Publishers Weekly"It was a plague so deadly that if a similar virus were to strike today, it would kill more people in a single year than heart disease, cancers, strokes, chronic pulmonary disease, AIDS and Alzheimer's disease combined." Between 20 million and 100 million people worldwide died in the 1918 flu pandemic, but for years afterward this deadliest plague in

history was almost completely forgotten. Histories and even medical texts rarely mentioned it. This disconnect between the flu's devastation and its obscurity is the starting point for Kolata's incisive history. She explains how the plague spread, covers the various speculations about its causes and origins and gives an account of the search to retrieve a specimen of the virus strain once genetic science had advanced enough to unravel the virus's mysteries. Tissue samples from an obese woman buried in the permafrost of Alaska and from two soldiers who died in army camps preserved by the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology in thumb-sized bits of paraffin prove to be the last remaining sources of the 1918 strain. Kolata, a science writer for the New York Times and author of *Clone*, profiles the scientists who tracked down these samples, follows their investigations and explains their conclusions. Could such a deadly flu appear again? Many scientists fear it could, hence their quick response to the 1997 outbreak of chicken flu in Hong Kong, which led to the slaughter of 1.2 million birds and, Kolata argues, averted another worldwide disaster. Clearly explaining both the science and the social toll of the pandemic, Kolata writes an admirable history and soberly spells out how the U.S. government is prepared or unprepared for a similar public health threat today. (Nov.)

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